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LGBT Groups and Elected Officials Decry Passage of AHCA

by Winnie McCroy
EDGE Editor
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LGBT groups and elected officials alike decried the passage of the American Health Care Act in the U.S. House of Representatives, citing the impact it will have on their constituents with preexisting conditions, and on women and children. Many were also upset that the legislation was hastily pushed through Congress by a partisan 217 to 213 margin.

"It's unfortunate that so many House members decided to ram through this dangerous legislation without sufficient debate or even a CBO score," said LGBT Equality Caucus Executive Director Roddy Flynn. "What we know for sure is that AHCA will rip health care coverage away from the most vulnerable among us, including LGBT people who suffer from higher levels of

poverty and greater health disparities. We hope the Senate will stop this disastrous legislation from ever becoming law."

The AHCA would undermine the Medicaid program and rollback the ACA's Medicaid Expansion, which provides access to health care for millions of low-income Americans, including those who are LGBT or living with HIV. The AHCA would particularly harm older LGBT Americans, as it significantly raises out of pocket costs for Americans in their 50s and 60s.

SAGE CEO Michael Adams said the legislation dangerously sets the table for future government-supported religious discrimination against LGBTs.

"Anti-LGBT religious leaders and denominations are aggressively lobbying the federal government to authorize religious-based discrimination against LGBT people, including elders who rely on federally funded services," said Adams. "We will do everything in our power to fight efforts by the Trump Administration to facilitate religious-based discrimination against our older community members, who have fought for decades for the equality that we have gradually won."

Mental Health America said that the move is tragic for "all those dealing with or caring for someone with serious mental health concerns, and The National Education Association said the AHCA was playing "Robin Hood in reverse," with NEA President Lily Eskelsen García noting how, "Apparently, snatching health care coverage from children and families was not enough for House Republican leaders and the Trump administration. The act also allows states to jettison existing essential health benefit requirements and to remove protections for people with pre-existing conditions. Bottom line, this bill is harmful and irresponsible. Families should not have to face the threat of bankruptcy due to unaffordable medical bills."

GMHC CEO Kelsey Louie said the legislation put millions at risk, especially people with HIV, adding, "This vote [is] a direct attack on our clients, many of whom may lose their health insurance and their ability to access PrEP. The potential outcomes are devastating, not just for the LGBT community, but for all Americans. We call on leaders in the U.S. Senate to stop this dangerous bill from moving forward."

New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand said that while Obamacare wasn't perfect, health insurance was still too costly for most Americans, and Congress should fix it, either via subsidies or with a non-profit public option.

"Health care shouldn't be about politics -- it is about people -- and this bill would harm people," said Gillibrand. "The only beneficiaries of this bill are big insurance companies and the wealthiest, with the price tag being paid by everyone else."

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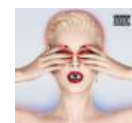


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Congresswoman Barbara Lee called the legislation "an evil bill that rips healthcare from 24 million Americans while handing \$600 billion to the wealthy and big corporations."

"The drastic cuts in the Republican repeal plan gut services for children with disabilities, increases costs for cancer patients, steals from seniors and allows insurance companies to price-gouge people with pre-existing conditions," said Lee. "Republicans' core values were on full display, demonstrating the disgusting belief that only the rich are worthy of access to healthcare. Losing the lifesaving coverage provided by the Affordable Care Act would be a death sentence for thousands of Americans. I urge Republicans in the Senate to reject this disastrous bill and work with Democrats to improve the Affordable Care Act."

And Congresswoman Gwen Moore called the issue "quite simply a matter of life and death for my constituents." She was appalled that President Trump and her Republican colleagues had proven all too willing to turn their backs on the country's women by endangering maternity and prenatal care and allowing insurers to deny preventive health care services like mammograms and gynecological exams. Under Trumpcare, conditions like postpartum depression and being a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault could be considered pre-existing conditions, and women in uniform will be at risk as millions of veterans and their families will face a multitude of barriers in seeking care.

All hoped the Senate would think better of passing the legislation, with Moore looking to her "colleagues in the Senate to be guided by the pleas of their constituents who have voiced their strident opposition to this disastrous bill. For their sake, I hope those in the upper chamber will use the commonsense and empathy that is severely lacking across the aisle in the House. The lives of all our constituents are on the line."

Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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