

Advocating for access to safe, quality care



Join ANA in the fight for our patients' lives.

AS I WRITE THIS, the next steps in the GOP's crusade to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) remain unclear. However, together with our nurse advocates around the nation we can cheer the successful efforts used to defeat faulty legislation that would have denied patients' access to affordable, quality health care. I thank you for your passion and great work.

Knowing the desire for change is strong, we must remain vigilant to address what lies ahead and encourage the improvements that will strengthen, not dismantle, the current system. And what I also know for certain is this: Most people enjoy greater peace of mind when they have insurance and access to health care for themselves and their families.

Recently, ANA began hearing from nurses about the ACA's impact on their patients, as well as concerns that its replacement might undermine important progress. More than 500 nurses relayed patients' fears of losing preventive care, being denied insurance coverage because of preexisting conditions, and the inability to pay for any coverage at all.

Patients worry about losing insurance, including Medicaid, and fear becoming bankrupt because of high medical bills; relying on the emergency department for care; and potentially dying if they can't access health services. One woman described to CNN her concern about losing coverage for life-sustaining medications and follow-up care after a kidney transplant. Many of these comments probably echo the concerns of you and your patients.

ANA works nonstop to develop resources to keep nurses up-to-date on proposed healthcare reforms and other actions, including the latest budgetary challenges to nursing workforce development, research, and public health. The healthcare reform page on ANA's website details our ongoing work on behalf of nurses and consumers, and offers opportunities for you to engage in advocacy on a larger scale (www.nursingworld.org/healthsystemreform). Thousands of you already have reached out to U.S. senators and representatives to amplify our messages, which no doubt contributed to the

initial downfall of the flawed American Health Care Act. Fearsome grassroots efforts to protect health care, including town halls, overwhelming the phone systems on Capitol Hill, and stuffing officials' email inboxes, have surged across the country.

ANA consistently calls for reforms that guarantee access to affordable, high-quality health care for all. This also means consumers having affordable health insurance and, if needed, the financial assistance to obtain that coverage. We remain steadfast in our principles for health system transformation. Using a range of media channels, we've shared these principles with the Trump administration and federal lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, our healthcare colleagues, and with the public.

Simply stated, ANA's principles focus on ensuring that all citizens and residents have access to a standard package of essential healthcare services, including mental health and maternity care; promoting and supporting cost-effective preventive services; embracing innovative health models that encourage wellness, prevention, and coordinated care, which in turn will lower costs and increase insurance affordability; and building a well-prepared workforce that can meet the healthcare challenges and needs of a growing population.

These principles were informed in large part by our Code of Ethics for Nurses, nursing's long-time commitment to preventive services and serving vulnerable populations, and nurses' everyday experiences with patients and their families. Nurses are often called both the first and last lines of defense. The reality is we're patient advocates at every point of care—protecting patients' right to obtain care, managing their illnesses, and addressing their overall health. We can't falter now in our professional responsibility by allowing the health needs of any consumers—young, old, economically disadvantaged or not—to be dismissed in any legislative, regulatory, or budgetary proposal that trades health for hubris.

Join ANA in continuing to give voice to our patients. Help us realize nursing's vision for a transformed healthcare system. Our patients' lives depend on us. ★



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