



Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner  
Director

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July 27, 2017

Senator Rob Portman  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Portman,

We, the undersigned Reform Jewish clergy of Ohio, write to urge you to protect affordable health care access for Ohioans and Americans across the country. We represent congregations with members who hold a wide range of political opinions, but are united in our belief that health care is a fundamental human right.

As rabbis and cantors, we provide support for congregants and their families who encounter sickness and the enormous emotional toll associated with health challenges. While we believe deeply in the spiritual and communal power of healing, we recognize that we are partners with health professionals and that access to care is indispensable.

We thank you for your outspoken support for Medicaid and your commitment to Ohioans--low-income people, individuals with disabilities, and those struggling with addiction--who rely on that essential program. We agree that protecting the most vulnerable members of our society should be of paramount importance in our health care system. We are also grateful for your commitment last week to finding solutions that lower costs while also protecting care, and to not supporting legislation that repeals the Affordable Care Act without a replacement. We share this perspective and hope your fellow Senators will heed your guidance.

As the Senate debates the future of health care this week, we strongly encourage you to only support legislation that builds on the progress the Affordable Care Act has meant for millions of Americans. Even the proposal to repeal just the law's individual and employers mandate would be a grave threat to the Ohioans who have health care through the individual marketplace. Such a proposal would amount to a repeal without a replacement, and would disproportionately harm those on the exchange with the greatest health needs. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that repealing the individual mandate would cause 15 million people to lose health insurance, including seven million Medicaid enrollees.

We recognize that the Affordable Care Act is imperfect, and look forward to the possibility of strengthening the law to allow more people to access quality, affordable health care. We hope that any effort to implement improvements will happen in a transparent, bipartisan manner, and include committee hearings, consultation with experts, and input from the public. Hastily passing legislation without time to evaluate it will bring us no closer to the health care system Ohio, and America, deserves.

For centuries, Jewish tradition has emphasized the importance of health care and the belief that no person should be denied care because they could not afford it. As you consider the various proposals on the Senate floor this week, we hope you will vote to protect the Ohioans whose health care lies in the balance. We are eager to work with you and your office to discuss solutions that will benefit our congregants and your constituents.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Jon Adland  
Temple Israel  
Canton, Ohio

Rabbi Karen Bodney-Halas  
Temple Israel  
Dayton, Ohio

Rabbi Daniel Bogard  
Cincinnati, Ohio

Rabbi Karen Bogard  
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