September 18, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

The Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) opposes the current version of the proposal to replace the Affordable Care Act being circulated by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Bill Cassidy, MD (R-LA). The long-standing public health programs that are currently in jeopardy due to elimination of the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) in this proposal would be devastating for our 28 large, urban health departments – and to the nation as a whole.

BCHC is a forum for the leaders of America’s largest metropolitan health departments to exchange strategies and jointly address issues to promote and protect the health and safety of their residents. Collectively, BCHC member jurisdictions directly impact more than 54 million people, or one in six Americans.

Among the programs at risk at the CDC are the 317 Immunization Program, Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity Grants, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, and a host of chronic disease programs. The PPHF provides vital resources to governmental public health at all levels, and its elimination will further erode our fragile health system.

Eliminating public health programs that are now funded by the ACA would seriously undermine the ability of cities and counties to protect and promote health. The loss of hundreds of millions of dollars would hamper efforts to respond to food borne illness outbreaks, prevent emerging infectious diseases like Ebola and Zika, and respond to natural disasters like Hurricanes Irma and Harvey.

Further, we are also concerned that the Graham-Cassidy proposal would block grant many of the current ACA protections, which provide access to primary and emergency care to millions of Americans. Erosion of the essential benefits package would jeopardize access to primary prevention services, including immunizations, mammograms, and other health screening tests.

Our nation needs a strong public health system with the capacity to promote health, prevent illness, and treat disease. Our members urge you to sustain current investments in public health and prevention by rejecting the Graham-Cassidy proposal.

Sincerely,

Chrissie Juliano, MPP
Director, Big Cities Health Coalition