

July 7, 2017

Senator Cory Gardner
354 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gardner:

Caring for Colorado is a private, non-profit grant making foundation that is dedicated to improving the health and health care of the people of Colorado. In 2016, we celebrated 15 years and \$100 million in grant making to improve access to health care, especially for the most vulnerable and underserved individuals in our state.

As the founding President and CEO of Caring for Colorado, I have had the privilege of traveling throughout the state during the last 15 years to visit with and hear from people – from all walks of life, about the challenges they face in accessing high quality health care. I want to share my observations from these community conversations because it is clear to me that the proposed Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA) represents a major step backward for Colorado.

I have heard repeatedly and understand that, as Coloradans, we share these values:

- Everyone should have the opportunity to live a healthy and productive life.
- Access to health care is a basic right that should be extended to all Coloradans and Americans.

We know that access to quality health care is critical to attaining these shared goals. Expansion of Medicaid, under the Affordable Care Act, created the opportunity for hard working, low-income Coloradans to gain coverage. **This was a life-saving opportunity for many.** The result is that Colorado is at a historic high in the percentage of individuals with health coverage – with more than 90% insured.

The BCRA will undermine this tremendous achievement by eliminating coverage for 450,000 Coloradans and more than 20 million individuals nationally. Surely you don't believe that the Colorado family of four – making less than \$34,000 annually that currently qualifies for Medicaid – will be able to afford health insurance in the open marketplace, even if there is a modest reduction in costs?

As you consider what happens to the ACA, the most common things I hear that people want from national health policy are:

- Access to quality insurance coverage that meets their needs, such as comprehensive women's health services, mental health care, oral health, preventive care, etc.
- To be free from the worry of being denied coverage due to pre-existing conditions or lifetime limits.

CARING *for* COLORADO FOUNDATION
A Health Grantmaker

- Affordable prescription medications.
- To know that, as seniors, older adults can still afford to see a health care provider and won't be priced out of the market simply due to their age.
- That all communities (rural, frontier, urban) have the basic health care infrastructure to meet health needs including health professionals, hospitals, mental health care, dental clinics and emergency medical services.

The ACA offers a sound framework from which we can build an efficient and cost-effective system of health care that achieves the goal of all people having access to quality health care services. Many resources, including those of Caring for Colorado, have been directed to build upon this framework. Please, let us not lose these investments!

There is a limit to what we can do locally to make a difference. We need supportive and effective national policies and shared federal resources to achieve health care for all.

Senator, your leadership is needed now. So, please, (in your words), "take the time to get it right for the people of Colorado." **Please work to defeat BCRA and to fix the ACA to serve all your constituents in Colorado and the nation.**

Sincerely,



Chris J. Wiant, MPH, PhD
President and CEO