

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

January 29, 2019

Chairman Richard Neal
Ways & Means Committee
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Neal,

Thank you for the convening the hearing today about the status of the Affordable Care Act and policies related to consumer protections, health care coverage, and costs. Republicans strongly support protecting patients with pre-existing conditions, but we must do more than protect our health care; we have to work together to make it more affordable. I am happy to have this first hearing in the 116th Congress be an opportunity to explore an issue that is tremendously important to every American and an issue on which we have more in common than not. I write to highlight several critical principles that will be a focus of our discussion today and moving forward.

First, we all support protections for people with pre-existing conditions and reforms to lower health care costs. Insurance companies should not be allowed to deny coverage or charge more to people with pre-existing conditions. Any suggestion that we don't support affordable access to health coverage for all Americans, especially the most vulnerable, is inaccurate. In fact, the plain language of the American Health Care Act passed in the last Congress states, "Nothing in this Act shall be construed as permitting health insurance issuers to limit access to health coverage for individuals with preexisting conditions." Moreover, one of the first votes we took this Congress was to reinforce this position.

Second, while we understand your interest in defending a law Congress enacted nearly a decade ago, the current system contains numerous serious flaws that harm individuals and families. Overall health care costs have continued to escalate, leaving individuals and families exposed to high out-of-pocket costs. Often patients who want to access their personal doctor or local hospital find the plans offered in their area don't give them that choice. The bottom line is the ACA is not working as promised. The fact that health care is still the top concern of many Americans underscores this point. As Secretary Azar noted, "...[a]ccording to the Health Care Cost Institute, from 2012 to 2016, Americans' utilization of healthcare services stayed flat—healthcare spending only rose because

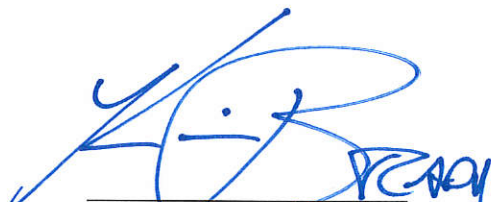
prices rose. This is a system that needs fundamental reforms, not just tweaks to financing.”¹ Americans need cheaper alternatives and more choices.

Congress needs to talk about the future, not just the past. Health care and consumer needs have changed dramatically in the last ten years. Unfortunately, the debate in Congress and many current policies have not. It’s time to start looking forward and determine how we can improve the health care needs of all Americans in 2019 and beyond, not the problems they faced over a decade ago.

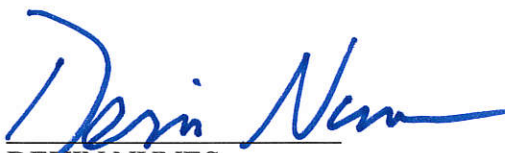
Third, we have a number of ideas about how to lower the cost of health care, provide more choices, and improve health care for all Americans. We hope you will join with us to advance this dialogue about the future of health care and how price transparency, technology, innovation, and regulatory reforms can improve patient care, access to coverage, and health outcomes for individuals and families.

It’s time to stop debating the past and start working on the issues the American people have told us they need Congress to address. Our obligation in the legislative branch is to legislate—to draft laws that will protect Americans, promote innovation, and provide affordable access to quality health care. Let’s do that together. We hope you will join us in working on these exciting opportunities.

Sincerely,



KEVIN BRADY
Republican Leader
Ways & Means Committee



DEVIN NUNES
Republican Leader
Ways & Means Committee, Health
Subcommittee

¹ Azar II, Alex M. “Remarks on Healthcare Choice and Competition at AEI.” American Enterprise Institute. 4 Dec. 2018.