



The Honorable Roy Blunt
U.S. Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blunt:

As Congress begins its new year of work in 2017 with early discussions about the repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), I want to share the REACH Healthcare Foundation's concerns about any rapid action to repeal the ACA without a well-defined plan for addressing the health coverage needs of Americans.

The REACH Foundation is a Kansas City regional philanthropy created out of the sale of a former nonprofit hospital system that for 13 years has invested in access to health, mental health and dental care in rural, suburban and urban areas on the western side of the state. Through our work, we have seen how access to health coverage has eased the financial stress on Missouri workers as well as on the clinics, hospitals and individual health providers that provide care to the state's most vulnerable.

Thousands of Missourians have taken advantage of the opportunity to purchase health care coverage through the state's federally facilitated health insurance marketplace. Last year, 250,000 people enrolled through the health insurance marketplace; approximately 40% of those enrollees were new to the exchange. In our Greater Kansas City region, we have seen strong decreases in the uninsurance rate over the past several years. For example, in Jackson County, uninsurance dropped from 19% in 2013 to 12% in 2016. In Platte County, uninsurance went from 11% to 5% during the same time period. In Lafayette County, with a large agricultural base, uninsurance dropped from 16% to 11%.

We urge Senate leaders to begin to outline improvements to the health law before taking action to repeal the ACA, and to step back from any strategy of "repeal and delay" that would certainly create instability in the system serving Missourians today. Furthermore, we ask you to give careful attention to provisions that consumers value, such as protections regarding pre-existing conditions, coverage for young adults up to age 26, and access to basic, preventive care.

The REACH Foundation has invested in quality initiatives and access to care for more than 13 years, working with dozens of health organizations and local community leaders on solutions that make sense for their residents. I welcome any opportunity to share our experiences with you and to introduce you to health providers who are meeting the health needs of hard-working people every day.

Thank you for representing the concerns of Missouri at this most important time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda R. Sharpe".

Brenda R. Sharpe
President and CEO