



September 24, 2017

Chairman Hatch, Ranking Member Wyden, and Members of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Kari Jones and I am the President & CEO of the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio. I represent over 1,200 individuals with Down syndrome—and their families—in 23 Central and Southern Ohio counties. I also write with unified support from all of the Ohio Down Syndrome associations: the Up Side of Downs in Cleveland, the Down Syndrome Association of the Valley, the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Toledo, the Miami Valley Down Syndrome Association, and the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Cincinnati. Combined, our service area covers all of Ohio's 88 counties and the residents within them.

Please do NOT support the Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson Proposal. Advancing this bill forward, without independent analysis and understanding its effects on each state, is completely unacceptable and goes against the founding principles of American democracy. The Congressional Budget Office's analysis is still several weeks away. This evaluation is critical to fully understanding the bill's impact. Without it, you put the the health and welfare of Ohioans and Americans at risk.

I have built a career on fighting for the rights of those who need support and making their voices heard. I encourage you to consider a couple of our core democratic values: Equality and Common Good. Much to my dismay, the disparity in equality between people with disabilities and those without disabilities is significant. This bill will only deepen that divide. As public servants, don't we have a duty to work together to promote the welfare of the community for the benefit of all?

Although I speak on behalf of my organization, I also speak on behalf of my incredible brother, Alex, who has Down syndrome and is 32 years old. Alex is a fairly independent guy—he can catch a cab to get to his full-time job at Kroger and take care of his own personal hygiene. But capping expenditures and cutting dollars for Medicaid programs could eliminate the help Alex needs, such as his job coach and transportation assistance. To support community integration and economic independence, Alex needs more cost-effective health insurance options and support services, not less. The Medicaid funding cuts in the Graham-Cassidy proposal are a sharp turn in the wrong direction.

In closing, I implore you to carefully consider how your vote impacts some of your most vulnerable constituents, as well as the impact it will have on thousands of families throughout Ohio.

Thank you for your service and for inviting my testimony for this hearing.

Kari Jones
President & CEO
Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio