July 13, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell,

On behalf of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), I write to express our continued opposition to the revised Better Care Reconciliation Act (H.R. 1628). ASCO’s core mission is to ensure that cancer patients have meaningful access to high quality cancer care. The Better Care Reconciliation Act runs counter to this goal.

ASCO’s guiding principles for health care reform support improvements to the current health care system, and outline specific areas where people with cancer need protections. We shared these principles in January of this year and stand by them today. ASCO believes that any health system reform must ensure that all people affected by cancer receive high-quality care. We know Congress shares this belief and call on the Senate to work in a bipartisan manner to ensure access to high-quality cancer care, rather than move forward with H.R. 1628.

As cancer care providers, we are especially concerned with provisions that would erode critical protections for patients with cancer by allowing insurers to sell products that do not meet their needs, including coverage for essential screening services. Additionally, a six-month waiting period for those that fail to obtain continuous coverage could leave many cancer patients and survivors without access to needed care.

Reducing access to affordable health insurance will add costs to the system, decrease access to appropriate treatment and increase existing disparities in care. Removing protections from current federal law through state waivers or other means allows for a weakening of these critical provisions and a system of inequitable treatment across state lines for cancer patients. We urge policymakers to ensure that robust requirements are in place to ensure that all insurance products cover the full scope of services and therapies that cancer patients require.

ASCO strongly opposes passage of the Better Care Reconciliation Act. We would welcome the opportunity to address health system reform that improves cancer care with you and your staff.
If you have any questions or would like assistance from ASCO on this or any issue involving the care of individuals with cancer, please do not hesitate to contact Amanda Schwartz at amanda.schwartz@asco.org or 571-483-1647.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Johnson, MD, FASCO
President, American Society of Clinical Oncology

cc: All Members of the US Senate