



January 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: ACP Releases New Vision for U.S. Health Care

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

The United States' health care system is broken. It's too expensive, too complicated, and leaves too many without access to affordable coverage and the care they need. Millions are uninsured or have difficulty paying for and accessing health care because of high deductibles and prices. The U.S. has poorer health outcomes for most conditions while spending more than any other wealthy country. The primary, cognitive and comprehensive care services provided by internal medicine specialists and other physicians are undervalued, even as we face mountains of paperwork and must navigate a gauntlet of government and insurer regulations that take time away from delivering patient care. Public health and preventive health initiatives are underfunded and underexplored. Our nation must do better.

American College of Physicians (ACP), the nation's largest physician specialty society and second-largest physician membership organization with 159,000 internal medicine physician and student members, has a long-standing commitment to evidence-based analysis of health policy issues and an abiding commitment to the goal of achieving comprehensive, affordable and guaranteed coverage and access to care for all Americans, going back to the 1980s. Today ACP released a series of policy papers published in a supplement to *Annals of Internal Medicine* titled "Better is Possible: The American College of Physicians Vision for the U.S. Health Care System," that outlines a New Vision for U.S. health care, assessing the strengths and weaknesses in the U.S. health care system today and offering policy recommendations for improvement. The papers are:

- Envisioning a Better Health Care System for All: [A Call to Action by the ACP](#)
- Envisioning a Better Health Care System for All: [Reducing Barriers to Care and Addressing Social Determinants of Health](#)
- Envisioning a Better Health Care System for All: [Coverage and Cost of Care](#)
- Envisioning a Better Health Care System for All: [Health Care Delivery and Payment System Reform](#)

The papers propose *interconnected, comprehensive, and evidence-based policy recommendations* that reimagine the nation's health care system as one where everyone has coverage for and access to the care they need, at a cost they and the country can afford; where social factors that contribute to poor and inequitable health are addressed; where health care payment and delivery systems put patients first and support physicians and their care teams in delivering high value, patient centered care; and where unnecessary, wasteful administrative spending is redirected to what matters most: patient care.

To achieve these goals, ACP recommendations include:

- *Transitioning to a system of universal coverage* through either a single-payer system or public choice model while continuing to make improvements in the current insurance system.
- *Ensuring that essential medical care is covered* by creating a process to define the benefits that should be required coverage by all payers.
- *Eliminating deductibles and co-payments that create barriers to high-value care*, especially for poor patients and those with chronic illnesses.
- *Lowering costs* by reducing excessive prices, increasing price transparency, expanding use of global budgets and all-payer rate setting, increasing investment in primary care, reducing spending on administration; and considering comparative effectiveness in coverage.
- *Reforming payment and delivery systems to put patients first*, by defining value based on what's best for patients, increasing payments for primary and cognitive care, redesigning value-based payment programs, eliminating "check the box" performance measures that do not improve quality, changing misaligned incentives that encourage doing more (volume) over doing better (quality and cost), and redesigning health information technology to better meet the needs of patients and their physicians.
- *Understanding, addressing and ameliorating social determinants of health* that result in poorer health and create barriers to needed care.
- *Taking immediate action on urgent public health threats*, including preventing firearms-related injuries and death, climate change, maternal mortality, substance use disorders, and tobacco and nicotine use.
- *Understanding and eliminating discrimination and disparities* in access to care based on a person's personal characteristics, location, and other factors.

The 2020 elections will bring renewed focus to the problems and possibilities of the U.S. health care system. ACP offers an evidence-based, carefully considered plan on how our nation's health care system can be transformed into a fair, just, and sustainable one for all Americans. We urge you to join us to advance the recommendations outlined in these papers. In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments about ACP's New Vision, please contact Brian Buckley at bbuckley@acponline.org.

Our patients deserve better and better is possible.

Sincerely,

Robert McLean, MD, MACP
 President
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Douglas DeLong, MD, MACP
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 American College of Physicians

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