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CONTACT: Shayna Diamond
Director, Community Affairs
Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association
602-445-4327 or sdiamond@azhha.org

May 4, 2017

American Health Care Act shifts costs to states, hospitals and patients

Statement from Debbie Johnston, AzHHA Senior Vice President of Policy Development

PHOENIX, AZ – The Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association releases the following statement regarding the American Health Care Act, which today passed the U.S. House of Representatives and now heads to the U.S. Senate for consideration:

“The Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association is deeply disappointed in today’s passage of the American Health Care Act because it would jeopardize health coverage for millions of Americans.

“This legislation – as currently written – represents a massive shift of financial risk and burden from the federal government to states, local healthcare providers and Arizona patients and families. Specifically, analysis of this legislation indicates it would significantly reduce the number of Arizonans with health coverage, while increasing costs for older and sicker Arizonans – including those on fixed incomes who are fortunate enough to maintain coverage at all.

“Just as concerning is the impact this legislation would have on Arizonans who depend upon Medicaid. This measure would slash funding for this critical healthcare safety net and roll back a large portion of the benefits in states such as Arizona that expanded eligibility in recent years. Reduced Medicaid enrollment means more people without health coverage and higher rates of uncompensated care borne by Arizona hospitals. This is a threat to the financial future of our industry.

“Arizonans with pre-existing conditions face similar uncertainty under this legislation, as it would give states leeway to charge these individuals higher rates or shuffle them into so-called ‘high risk’ pools in which the quality of care is not assured.

“The simple fact is there is much we don’t know about this legislation, as the House approved its passage before the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office could issue an analysis of the bill’s future impacts. That alone should give every American pause about the process being followed here.

“The Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association supports reforms to our nation’s healthcare system that would improve choice, access and cost. Now, we will work with the U.S. Senate as we continue collaborating with our national partners and state and federal leaders to find real, workable policy solutions to the challenges our healthcare system faces. In its current form, the American Health Care Act does not meet this crucial test.”

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About AzHHA

AzHHA is Arizona’s statewide association for those organizations and individuals devoted to collectively building better healthcare and health for the patients, people and communities of Arizona. Founded in 1939, AzHHA’s objective is to improve healthcare through Better Care, Better Health and Lower Costs with the ultimate goal of making Arizona the healthiest state in the nation. For more information, please contact communications@azhha.org or call (602) 445-4300.