

AACN's

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Your Inside Track to Federal Policy



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## Graham-Cassidy Healthcare Bill Lacks Votes to Pass

On September 26, Senate leadership opted to [forgo](#) putting the [Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson](#) (“Graham-Cassidy”) healthcare bill to a floor vote. The proposal was the latest attempt to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) before the budget reconciliation rules expire on September 30, which would only require a simple majority of 51 votes. The Graham-Cassidy proposal included provisions to replace the ACA’s funding distribution with lower and capped block grants to states, make extensive cuts to Medicaid, and roll back coverage for individuals with pre-existing conditions.

Earlier this week, Senators [John McCain \(R-AZ\)](#), [Rand Paul \(R-KY\)](#), and [Susan Collins \(R-ME\)](#) announced they would not support the legislation. Senator Collins’ final decision on September 25 came after the bill’s authors released a [revised version](#), which included additional funds for Alaska, Arizona, and Maine, as well as allowing states to wave a provision requiring coverage of clinical preventative services and benefits. The Congressional Budget Office released a [partial analysis](#) of the bill, which found that the federal deficit would be reduced by at least \$133 billion by 2026 and estimated that millions of people would lose comprehensive health coverage.

AACN issued a [statement](#) last week opposing the Graham-Cassidy bill, as it did not adhere to the principles that AACN has stood behind in health reform discussions: ensuring patients have access to quality health care with affordable coverage options, regardless of pre-existing conditions; upholding the principles of essential health benefits, and preserving Medicaid’s ability to protect our nation’s most vulnerable populations. The association also [sent a letter](#) to the Senate Finance Committee in advance of a September 25 hearing the committee held to examine the legislation. AACN Grassroots Network members took immediate action in response to Graham-Cassidy, contacting 82 Senate offices in the last week. Members have sent nearly 1,200 messages since the Senate took up health reform this year.

## Advocating to Preserve the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program

The U.S. Department of Education [Public Service Loan Forgiveness](#) (PSLF) program, which aims to reduce the loan burden of individuals who opt to work full-time in public service careers, has become a target in recent legislative discussions.

Those participating in PSLF must make 120 qualifying payments on their federal student loans in order for the remainder of their balance to be considered forgiven. According to recent [AACN survey on student debt](#), 57% of graduate nursing students reported they would be interested in participating in PSLF. For this reason, AACN has joined an interdisciplinary coalition of stakeholders representing health professions, law, and higher education working together to preserve funding for PSLF. The coalition will be engaging with Congressional champions as discussions surrounding the Higher Education Act reauthorization progress.

Congressional support has led to the formation of the bipartisan PSLF Caucus by Representatives Brendan Boyle (D-PA) and Ryan Costello (R-PA), whose efforts will focus on protecting the program. For more information on the PSLF program, visit [studentaid.gov](#) or AACN’s resource, [here](#).

