



## The 2017 Fight to *Defend Health Care*

On the evening of November 9, 2016 the health care advocacy landscape underwent a seismic shift. That night, the hard-fought health care wins of Barack Obama’s administration came under immediate threat. Obama’s successor, Donald J. Trump, had run for President of the United States on a pledge to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) “on day one” of his administration. That night, fortified by a Republican-led Congress, his promise neared reality.

The following morning, Community Catalyst’s work also underwent a seismic shift, as it instantly pivoted from ACA implementation and Medicaid expansion to ACA and Medicaid defense. Since that day, Community Catalyst has continued to be nimble and responsive in its internal and external work; adapting and adjusting to the challenges of a government intent on robbing millions of people of their health care while forging ahead with its other, non-campaign, funded work.

Using both Community Catalyst 501(c)(3) and Community Catalyst Action Fund (CCAF) 501(c)(4) funds<sup>1</sup> from foundation grants and individual donations, we invested \$4.5 million in advocacy groups in 29 states during 2017, targeting those with Republican members of Congress that we had identified as being key in the fight to prevent ACA repeal. Initial advocacy efforts also targeted Democrats who we knew needed some extra support staying the course in the face of political pushback. Additionally, we invested \$1.58 million for advertising in targeted states. All dollars combined, Community Catalyst and the CCAF poured \$6.08 million into the field and the fight to protect health care.

These funds, coupled with Community Catalyst’s intelligent and sustained technical assistance, ensured that advocacy groups had the resources and supports needed to organize the powerful grassroots movement that ultimately helped us ***protect our care*** in 2017.

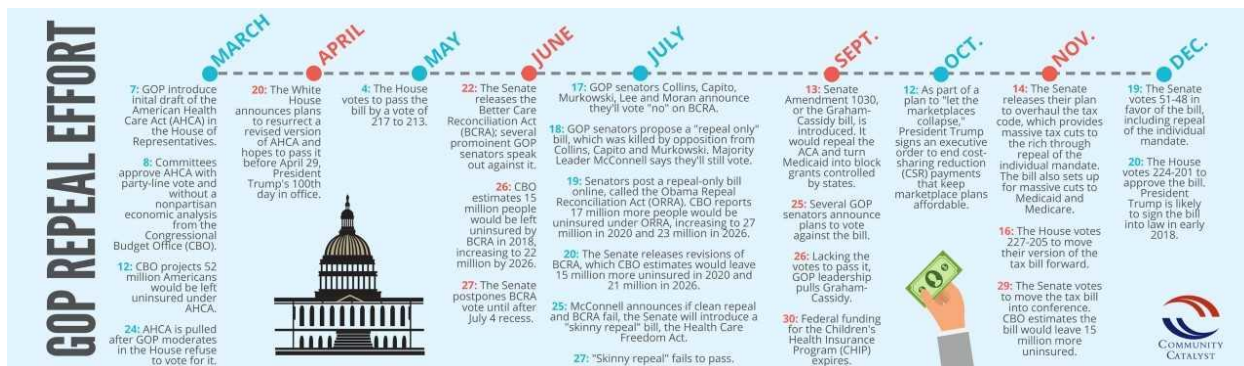
This report provides an overview of Community Catalyst’s role in the intense, national 2017 campaign to protect and defend the ACA and Medicaid:

- The formation of the national *Protect Our Care* Coalition and the launch of the *Protect Our Care* campaign.
- Our important contributions toward building and sustaining the work of state-based advocates throughout the year.
- Our work engaging new and existing funders in the effort to defend access to health care.
- The continued threats to the ACA and Medicaid in 2018 and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> All 501(C)(4) activities were carried out by the Community Catalyst Action Fund only, with the express consent of funders.

### Timeline of the GOP repeal effort in 2017



## National Partnerships – the *Protect Our Care* Coalition and Campaign

The day after the election, Community Catalyst immediately began providing real-time, rapid-response technical assistance to its network of health care advocates at over 150 organizations in more than 40 states, paving the way for a diverse range of advocates – including grassroots activists, hospital associations, educators, criminal justice organizations, disease-specific groups, reproductive justice organizations and small business owners – to play a key role in shifting the narrative within their states to ACA and Medicaid defense and influencing governors and members of Congress.

Recognizing the need for a strong, national response to the threats against health care from the new administration and Congress, Community Catalyst organized a call with a small group of national partners – most of which had been involved in ACA implementation – to create a coordinated defense campaign. This led to Community Catalyst’s pivotal role in the formation of the *Protect Our Care (POC)* coalition, its leadership of the steering committee through initial structuring, as well as its ongoing management of the resulting national *Protect Our Care* campaign.

The campaign’s mission was quickly established: Pool resources and align the work of its participants to ensure that people understood the damage that repealing the ACA and defunding Medicaid would cause, particularly without a robust replacement. Community Catalyst took the lead, ensuring that the campaign’s work with state advocates was strategically coordinated and adequately resourced to make the greatest possible impact. Once the campaign structure was in place, we continued to make vital contributions including:

- **Playing a pivotal role in ensuring that the protection of Medicaid was central to the POC campaign on both national and state levels.** Community Catalyst strategically elevated the importance of Medicaid defense within the *POC* coalition by restructuring its existing long-term *Close the Gap* project (focused on expanding Medicaid) into a new *Together for Medicaid* defense initiative. We invested \$2.5 million in 18 states and launched the *I Am Medicaid* state campaign to elevate Medicaid’s importance and ensure that consumer voices were heard by members of Congress. Campaign work

included a focus on the positive results of successful Medicaid expansion efforts in 31 states and Washington, D.C.

Community Catalyst's financial investment was supported with expert technical assistance that built advocates' capacity in multiple areas, including campaign planning, messaging, toolkit creation and stakeholder engagement, to fully maximize the impact of their work.

Our dual investments of time and funding empowered state advocates to run state-level campaigns that thwarted repeal efforts for months through orchestrated, collaborative grassroots organizing at the state level and rapid support from *POC* partners at the national level.

- **Bringing health equity to the conversation and emphasizing its role in the opioid addiction crisis**, a key issue in many states with large, rural populations. We educated national groups, members of Congress, state advocates and other stakeholders, including policy and addiction advocates, about the harm that GOP health care proposals would cause to people with substance use disorders generally, along with the dangers of opioid-specific messaging and its role in alienating people of color, who are disproportionately prosecuted and incarcerated for addiction.
- **Engaging key stakeholders at the local, state and national levels** in the health care fight. At the start of the year many important stakeholders were taking a wait-and-see stance on the sidelines. In response to what we believed was an urgent situation, Community Catalyst's Center for Consumer Engagement in Health Innovation organized [an event in Washington, D.C.](#) in early March, in partnership with The Commonwealth Fund, the Missouri Foundation for Health and The Institute for Healthcare Improvement, to spur involvement. This event brought together leaders from prominent health systems across the country to highlight the innovations and initiatives made possible by the ACA and a strong Medicaid program and underscore the impact repeal would have on continued health system transformation.

To complement the event, the Center arranged for over 20 national health system leaders. Including those at the event, to sign on to a consensus [statement](#) calling for the protection of robust health coverage, quality improvements and a continued migration toward high-value, coordinated care. This accompanied a press release about the event, where the signed statement was on prominent display as a poster.

In addition, Community Catalyst co-led the *POC* coalition stakeholder workgroup, working throughout the campaign to convince key stakeholders to engage in our opposition to congressional efforts to repeal the ACA and cut Medicaid. Our consistent outreach – to hospitals, insurance industry affiliates, providers, small business leaders, patient groups and other social justice organizations – resulted in public statements,

meetings with key members of Congress, and media coverage highlighting the impact of the various policies on these key constituencies.

- **Bringing critical intelligence to the campaign** through a partnership between Community Catalyst’s external relations team and our Washington D.C.-based lobbyists, our partnership with Manatt law firm and our wide network of state government connections, all of which provided crucial information about the Republican repeal strategy that was key to our developing effective, immediate responses. Manatt and the University of Massachusetts Gerontology Institute also provided us with vital state-level information on the impact of Medicaid cuts.
- **Helping create and then seamlessly integrate “No repeal without replace” messaging** with state partners as they worked to contact their targeted elected officials. By including this language in all talking points, sample op-eds and letters to the editor, and encouraging stakeholders such as hospitals, businesses and law enforcement to utilize it, the message was firmly established and worked to hold Congress accountable for the disastrous consequences of repealing the ACA without a robust replacement.

## State Partnerships – Rapid Response Technical Assistance and Sub-Grants

### The Health Justice Fund: Investing in State-Based Advocacy

Throughout 2017, Community Catalyst provided comprehensive, rapid response technical assistance to state advocacy groups in 29 states, underpinned by subgrants from our [Health Justice Fund](#) of \$4.5M.

Via conference calls, email alerts and other immediate communications, we ensured that advocates were provided with rapidly developing, complex information from the federal level as it happened, along with an understanding of its significance to their particular states.

In return, our extensive network of state partners provided Community

Catalyst with updates on the thoughts and actions of their elected representatives, which we used to inform the national campaign.



# Community Catalyst Health Justice Fund Fuels a National Health Advocacy Movement



The Health Justice Fund is a collaborative funding effort between Community Catalyst and a network of national and state foundations and individual donors whose goals are to mobilize the consumer health advocacy movement against threats to health care access and increase resources available for health advocacy<sup>2</sup>. The graphic here shows all investments by the fund since its inception in 2011.

This powerful combination of targeted and timely technical assistance and immediate access to funding allowed us to strengthen and support state-level grassroots coordination and build the capacity of groups by providing policy analysis, messaging strategy, coalition-building expertise and other skills vital to winning the fight to protect the ACA and Medicaid.

These investments of time and money generated important results that were key to protecting health care. Examples include:

- **Grassroots organization:** Immediately after the election, Community Catalyst contracted with Change Corps to embed trained grassroots organizers in grantee organizations in four states – Maine, Tennessee, Pennsylvania and Ohio – to target Republican senators we believed could be convinced to vote against repeal without a replacement plan. This enabled these organizations to rapidly accelerate their organizing work, while hiring long-term organizers.

<sup>2</sup> Since its inception in 2011 (as the ACA Implementation Fund) the Health Justice Fund has been supported by The Atlantic Philanthropies, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, Ford Foundation, The Jacob and Valeria Langeloth Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The California Endowment, CVS Caremark, several anonymous funders and individual donors.

Over the course of six weeks, these organizers generated over 750 handwritten letters to those senators, held several in-district meetings between senators' staff and consumers at risk if the ACA were repealed, sparked over 100 calls to target offices, and generated dozens of LTEs and earned media hits in opposition to ACA repeal. Their work holding senators accountable for their actions, coupled with the outcomes of the broader campaigns they supported, moved three of the targeted senators to require that a replacement plan would have to be in place before they repealed key provisions of the ACA.

In Kansas, throughout 2016, Community Catalyst's consistent, sustained support for organizing to close the coverage gap created a robust grassroots constituency and a hospital association that was outspoken in its support for Medicaid. Capitalizing on this foundation, *Together for Medicaid* grantee Alliance for a Healthy Kansas and its constituency worked closely with the hospital association to articulate to Senator Jerry Moran the harm the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA) would do to rural hospitals.

The Alliance also organized well-attended town hall meetings during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July recess that included personal testimony from people who would be negatively impacted by the BCRA. This generated substantial, widespread media attention.

These activities created a local and national narrative that helped deal a fatal blow to the BCRA: Senators Moran and Mike Lee announced they would vote against it, halting Senator Mitch McConnell's attempts to build momentum behind it.

- **State level stakeholder activation:** Partnerships in Arizona with the Children's Action Alliance led to a comprehensive report demonstrating the negative impacts of repeal on Arizona kids and families. It was widely reported that Governor Ducey, a Republican who was in close communication with Sen. John McCain, relied heavily on this to reiterate his opposition to the "skinny" repeal bill.
- **Closing the Coverage Gap:** The successful effort during the Obama administration to expand Medicaid in Alaska, supported by Community Catalyst through technical assistance and subgrants provided to state groups, led to coverage gains for more than 8,000 Alaskans and an influx of \$260 million in federal Medicaid dollars. This earlier investment helped build a base of ACA and Medicaid supporters who heavily influenced Senator Murkowski's decision to vote no on ACA repeal.

## Targeted Communications Using Dedicated 501(c)(4) Funds

Included in Community Catalyst's \$6.08 million investment were

- **Community Catalyst's Center for Consumer Engagement in Health Innovation:** The Center made changes to an existing \$500,000 grant program to accommodate new post-election priorities. The grant program, initially focused on health innovation, allowed health advocates in six blue states to spend some of their grant money on ACA and Medicaid defense. Advocates in these states focused primarily on Republican House targets and Republican governors.
- **LTSS Campaign:** With the assistance of a \$250,000 (c)(4) grant from an anonymous donor, the CCAF implemented a rapid response effort to highlight the impact of Medicaid cuts on seniors and others reliant on long-term services and supports (LTSS) as part of the campaign to defend the ACA and Medicaid. The LTSS campaign began on June 7, 2017 and ended July 27, 2017, focusing on Alaska, Arizona, Nevada and West Virginia and including radio advertising, phone banking, digital advertising and earned media. The phone banking effort generated 614 calls to Sen. Murkowski of Alaska, 2,336 calls to Sen. Flake of Arizona, 2,118 calls to Sen. Heller of Nevada, and 1,737 calls to Sen. Capito of West Virginia.

A series of Facebook advertisements generated tens of thousands of shares, reactions and Facebook comments, as well as 12,500 visitors to the microsite [KeepCareAtHome.com](http://KeepCareAtHome.com). Community Catalyst created the site to provide visitors with an easy way to call or email their senators and share the site with their social network.

- **TV and Radio Ads:** In tandem with the LTSS campaign's radio and digital ads highlighting the impact of ACA repeal on seniors, we received a \$1.58M (c)(4) grant from an anonymous donor to launch a TV ad campaign to fight repeal. The ads, which aired for two weeks in Alaska, Maine, Nevada and West Virginia and asked viewers to call Senators Murkowski, Collins, Heller and Capito, featured a mother with a child who has asthma, requiring a lifetime of treatment and frequent visits to the doctor.

In mid-September, we also received a \$195,000 anonymous donation to support another [round of CCAF radio ads](#) airing in Alaska, Arizona, Maine; Ohio, Washington, D.C. and West Virginia. The ads ran during drive time in key media markets and urged people to call Senators Collins, Capito, McCain, Murkowski and Portman to oppose the Graham-Cassidy repeal bill.

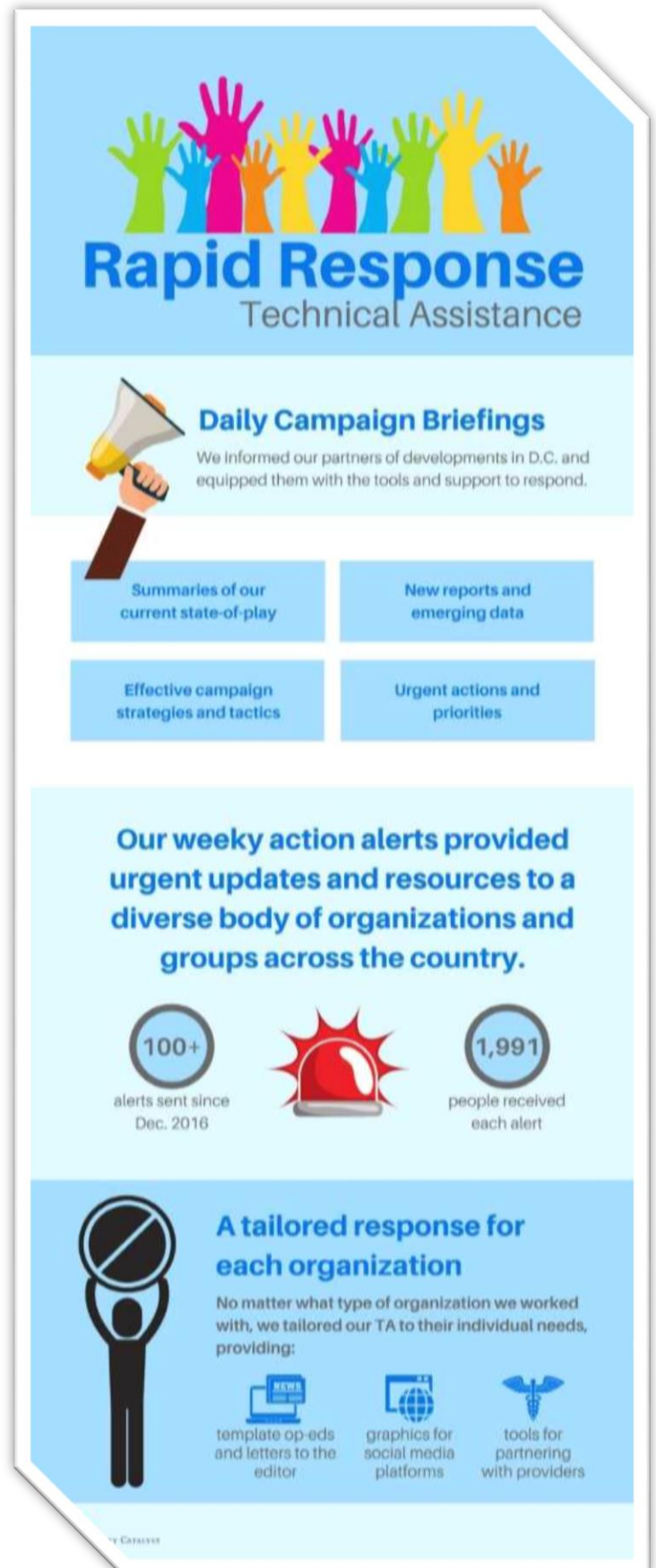
## Rapid-Response Technical Assistance

A key element of Community Catalyst's campaign to defend the ACA and Medicaid program was our rapid-response technical assistance model created to keep our partners informed of critical developments emerging from the federal government and equip them with resources to support their advocacy campaigns in states and local communities.

Throughout the campaign, Community Catalyst provided just-in-time technical assistance to state partners through one-on-one phone calls, learning community calls to our large network of advocates and their grassroots partners, and regular email alerts with resources such as talking points, template op-eds and letters to the editor, social media content and policy analysis.

As the pace of the campaign increased, we provided a daily campaign briefing to key partners that included a summary of our current state-of-play, links to reports and emerging data, effective campaign strategies and tactics, and urgent actions advocates should prioritize. Advocates shared that this daily briefing helped them follow the often complicated legislative process at play, digest the multitude of updates and materials from national organizations and distill those pieces most relevant for their communities. Other key communications tools included:

- **Action alerts** utilizing our distribution list of over 2,000 traditional consumer health advocacy partners, community-based organizations, organizations of color, children's groups, substance use disorder advocates and others. Over 80 action alerts were sent during the duration of the campaign and used by our state partners as templates for





outreach and mobilization of their grassroots bases. These alerts included resources tailored to respond to the diverse needs of our partners and the unique strategies they were spearheading in their own campaigns. The resources provided strategic coaching across a spectrum of tactics to help our partners effectively influence their targets.

- **Communications templates and resources** drafted and shared directly with state and local partners through our listservs and via digital and social media became a valuable resource for informing and responding to quickly-changing circumstances. Prior to each round of Congressional voting, Community Catalyst staff developed social media posts to mobilize public action that targeted key swing district representatives and senators. We drafted more than 20 template op-eds and letters to the editor for submission by state partners, created dozens of social media graphics for dissemination on Facebook and Twitter and provided messaging guidance and talking points for a quick, coordinated response.
- **Policy analysis** to our state partners of each bill put forward by the House and Senate accompanied by a set of topline key takeaways and messaging guidance. Our policy team also created fact sheets and blog content highlighting how the various policies in each bill would impact specific, often marginalized populations, such as people of color and members of the LGBTQ community. We also developed state-by-state fact sheets highlighting the impact of Medicaid block grants and per capita caps, continuing to keep Medicaid defense a priority.
- **Blue states engagement and cross-state partnerships.** While the main focus of the campaign was on states with swing Republican senators, we saw key opportunities for states with mixed democratic leadership as well. We provided them with both messaging and tactical assistance, guiding them to focus on Republican governors or persuadable Republican House members and fostering cross-state partnerships that connected advocates in blue states with their counterparts in target states to assist with phone banking. We also encouraged advocates to work with ACA-supportive legislators on adopting neighboring districts where elected officials refused to hold public town halls.

### **Funding Partnerships – Grants for the Field**

Community Catalyst undertook significant outreach to national philanthropic foundations, providing education on the implications of ACA repeal and cuts to Medicaid. We particularly stressed the critical need for rapid response grants to resource our state-level campaign activities.

Contributions came from national foundations, and institutional and individual donors – many existing Community Catalyst funders who either awarded new grants specifically for the campaign or allowed us to repurpose current grants to address the new post-election

environment. We also received grants from several new funders that recognized the importance and urgency of the health care fight.

Our efforts would not have been possible without the tremendous support, flexibility and rapid response of funders and donors, for which we are very grateful.

## Grave Threats to Health Care in 2018 and Beyond

# OUR FIGHT ISN'T OVER

**GOP TAX PLAN**  
Republicans publicly weigh cutting or changing key ACA provisions, such as the individual mandate and Medicaid, to make room in their budget for massive tax cuts to the country's richest citizens.

**SABOTAGE**  
President Trump has already signed executive orders meant to sabotage the ACA. Among other actions, he withdrew funding of key ACA cost-sharing reduction payments and shortened open enrollment.

**CHIP FUNDING**  
Republicans in Congress have threatened the health care coverage of almost nine million kids by failing to extend CHIP. All members of Congress must return to bipartisan negotiations about offsets to ensure our kids are protected.

**BUDGET CUTS**  
The Trump administration gutted ACA advertising and navigator budgets across the country. In some states, these cuts hit 90%, severely limiting states' capacity to assist their residents in ACA enrollment.

**ATTACKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS**  
Trump's divisive, anti-immigration rhetoric and policies discourage people from seeking care, and his administration has used executive power to limit access to reproductive health services.

While we are proud of the significant role we were able to play in protecting the ACA and Medicaid, we are keenly aware that the fight is not over. In fact, yet another attempt to sabotage the ACA emerged in December in the form of a Republican tax bill that includes tax cuts for wealthy Americans that, according to the Central Budget Office, would add over \$1.4 trillion to the national deficit. Republicans plan to pay for this with deep cuts to Medicaid and Medicare, putting at risk millions of children, older adults, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ community and working families across the country who count on these vital programs to get the critical health care they need.

Once again, Community Catalyst has activated our state partners to engage their grassroots members and hold their elected representatives accountable for robbing average Americans of their health care to pay for tax cuts for the rich. And with near certainty, Congressional Republicans will continue over the next three and a half years to seek ways to dismantle the ACA and slash Medicaid.

Looking beyond the looming federal threats, our state-level work will be increasingly important. Without federal support to stabilize the ACA marketplaces, for example, it will be up to the states to consider state-based ways to prop up the marketplaces and react to federal changes to ensure that

consumers continue to have access to affordable and quality coverage. As we saw in October when the President announced an end to cost-sharing reduction payments, it was up to individual states to respond quickly to protect consumers in light of this last-minute policy change from the administration. Additionally, states are already taking matters into their own hands and reshaping the agenda to focus on improving, not dismantling, the ACA.

States like Oregon are using the 1332 waiver process to implement state-based reinsurance programs, others are looking to find ways to implement the ACA's key consumer protections through state law and advocates and key stakeholders around the country are promoting open enrollment periods to fill gaps where the administration has chosen to back off. This combination of both proactive and reactive state-work will be critical to ensuring that the ACA survives future threats.

With these initial successes under our belt and continuing strong partnerships with both new and existing funders, Community Catalyst is prepared to carry on leading the opposition and supporting state advocates across the country until good quality, affordable health care is available to all.

***Community Catalyst would like to thank all of our foundation and individual donors for their invaluable partnership. Looking ahead to ongoing fights and anticipated sabotage, their continued involvement will be crucial to our success in maintaining access to health care for all.***

*For more information on this report or Community Catalyst's work, please contact Melinda Crosby at [mcrosby@communitycatalyst.org](mailto:mcrosby@communitycatalyst.org)*