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**Contact:** Amy Friedrich-Karnik, Director, Public Policy

(202) 464-8740 or afriedrich@womenheart.org

**Patient Groups Say Proposed Rule Erodes Protections from Discrimination, Impairs Access to Critical Health Services**

Washington, D.C., August 13, 2019 – Fourteen patient and consumer groups representing millions of people nationwide with serious, chronic, and acute conditions urged the Administration to withdraw a proposed rule that would roll back key elements of Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act.  Comments (which can be [accessed here](https://www.womenheart.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/HCRL-1557-Patient-Coalition-Comments-August-13-2019.pdf)) were in response to the proposed rule issued on June 14, 2019 by the Department of Health and Human Services. Excerpts:

“In this proposed rule, the Department proposes to, among other things, reduce the number of entities subject to Section 1557’s non-discrimination requirements, eliminate protections against discrimination for certain populations, remove the prohibition on discriminatory benefit design, and remove requirements to help individuals, especially those with limited English proficiency (LEP), understand and enforce their rights against discrimination in healthcare. Individually and in the aggregate, the elimination of these important protections and reduction of rights set forth in the NPRM would have severe consequences for the health and well-being of Americans seeking health care services and coverage, especially those with serious, acute, chronic or other pre-existing conditions and those in vulnerable and under-served communities.”

“The proposed rule seeks to significantly narrow the scope of entities bound by the non-discrimination rules, contrary to Congressional intent, and increases the likelihood that these now-exempted entities could engage in discriminatory practices that will harm the health and well-being of communities that are currently protected.”

 “The proposed rule eliminates the prohibition against discrimination in insurance practice and design... Currently banned discriminatory practices include denying, canceling, limiting, or refusing to issue insurance; denying or limiting coverage of a claim; imposing additional cost-sharing or other limitations or restrictions on coverage; and using discriminatory marketing practices or insurance benefit designs… By definition, these predatory practices and discriminatory designs make health insurance widely inaccessible to our patient populations. We are deeply concerned that these practices will resume if the proposed rule’s policies are finalized.”

The groups signed on to the comments include:

WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease; ALS Association; Epilepsy Foundation; National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI); Apha-1 Foundation; National Psoriasis Foundation; Mended Hearts; Chronic Disease Coalition; National Organization for Rare Disorders; National Health Council; American Kidney Fund; Adult Congenital Heart Association; Leukemia & Lymphoma Society; Family Voices