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May 23, 2013

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

Passage of the Affordable Care Act was supposed to bring healthcare coverage to millions of uninsured people, a very laudable goal that we all supported. One of the promises made over and over again as the legislation was debated, approved and is now being implemented has been that ***“If you like your health care plan, you can keep your health care plan.”***

Unfortunately, this promise is being undermined by ESSB 5905, a move in the Washington Legislature to force all part-time K-12, higher education and state employees off the state health insurance system and onto the state health exchange and Medicaid.

For some this will undoubtedly mean higher costs and lower benefits and, especially for those who don't qualify for subsidies, much poorer access to healthcare.

Now imagine if every state in the country chooses to follow this pattern along with the State of Washington. At a time when the U.S. government is facing budget pressures, has provision been made for these unanticipated increased costs?

We remember when our state legislators were highly critical of large private businesses for eliminating healthcare coverage for their employees and pushing their costs onto government insurance programs like Medicaid. But now that's exactly what they are proposing to do to thousands of part-time state employees.

It is important for you to know how legislation in our own state is subverting the intent of the ACA and jeopardizing health care for thousands of our lowest paid public and K-12 employees. We urge you to contact legislative leadership and the Governor, and raise objections to ESSB 5905.

Respectfully,

Mary Lindquist, Washington Education Association
Vince Oliveri and Adrienne Thompson, International Federation of Professional and Technical Employees Local 17
Bev Hermanson, Retired Public Employees Council of Washington
Ellie Menzies, Service Employees International Union Local 1199NW
Dave Westberg, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 609
Adair Dammann and Lani Todd, Service Employees International Union Local 925
Matt Zuvich and Alia Griffing, Washington Federation of State Employees, AFSCME Council 28
Bernal Baca, American Federation of Teachers-Washington
Lily Wilson-Codega, Teamsters Joint Council No. 28