



THE PARTNERSHIP FOR MEDICAID

August 9, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

The Partnership for Medicaid – a nonpartisan, nationwide coalition made up of organizations representing clinicians, health care providers, safety net plans, and counties – appreciates your continued recognition of Medicaid’s indispensable role in our nation’s health care infrastructure. The Partnership for Medicaid (Partnership) is grateful for opportunities to engage with Congress to ensure Medicaid remains a lifeline now as Americans seek relief from the hardship caused by COVID-19, but also into the future as our country pursues policies to support long-term recovery and rebuilding. Since President Johnson and Congress envisioned the creation of Medicaid 56 years ago, the program has continued to grow as the nation’s health care safety net program, covering more than 80.5 million beneficiaries and, when combined with the Children’s Health Insurance Program, more than half of all U.S. children. Due to the unprecedented health and financial crises posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of Medicaid to the lives of these beneficiaries underscores why the Partnership encourages Congress to include provisions to strengthen the Medicaid program in any upcoming legislation.

Over the last year, Congress has consistently demonstrated a bipartisan commitment to the Medicaid program by offering states and providers additional flexibility and support to ensure care is maintained for underserved and often marginalized populations. Key Medicaid provisions included in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act were all critical to the health care safety net’s capacity to weather the COVID-19 crisis. The nation’s ongoing response to COVID-19 necessitates continued investment in the Medicaid program.

As part of our commitment to strengthening Medicaid, the Partnership supports efforts to ensure all individuals have access to high-quality health care coverage. **We are therefore pleased to see Congress is actively pursuing policy changes to close the health care coverage gap and support legislative changes to accomplish this work.** This would help insure millions currently lacking coverage, reducing inequities in access to health care and improving health outcomes overall. We look forward to working with Congress to help define Medicaid’s role in any program or policy to close the coverage gap.

The Partnership also applauds the commitment in President Biden’s American Jobs Plan to strengthen home- and community-based services (HCBS). This, coupled with the proposal to extend Medicaid’s Money Follows the Person program, would bolster the nation’s long-term care system. Medicaid is the leading provider of long-term supports and services; the Biden administration’s proposal to invest in the

HCBS infrastructure, including its workforce, will provide additional flexibility for Medicaid beneficiaries and help sustain this important component of the care delivery sector. **We encourage Congress to include these proposals in legislation.**

The Partnership further recommends that Congress consider the following to strengthen the Medicaid program and ensure a strong safety net to protect our most underrepresented patients:

- **Raise Medicaid payment levels:** Medicaid payment is 72 percent of Medicare for all services, and 66 percent for primary care.¹ Lack of parity between these rates is acutely felt in underserved areas, whether in rural or urban communities. Undervaluing Medicaid payments, and consequently the patients Medicaid serves, perpetuates systemic barriers to health and health care and exacerbates health disparities. Congress could improve Medicaid payments by creating new payment pathways for activities and services related to improving health equity, protecting supplemental payments, or working with the administration and states to increase Medicaid base payment rates. Congress could also consider the Kids Access to Primary Care Act (H.R. 1025), which would provide Medicaid payment parity with Medicare for the provision of primary care.
- **Increase the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for certain Medicaid services:** The Partnership has previously supported an increased FMAP of at least 12 percentage points, when combined with the increase in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, through the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency. We have also supported the Coronavirus Medicaid Response Act (S. 439 and H.R. 1353), which would provide an automatic FMAP increase in the event of an economic downturn. The Partnership encourages Congress to also examine legislation that calls for targeted FMAP increases in cases where such increases would improve health equity and parity among eligible populations. We would like to point out, however, that any increase in payment should take into consideration that more than 70 percent of beneficiaries are in managed care, which has been an important partner in advancing Medicaid's work.
- **Pass the bipartisan Supporting Medicaid in the U.S. Territories Act:** This legislation would extend increased Medicaid funding for Puerto Rico for five years and for additional U.S. territories for eight years. This critical policy would help avert a looming health care crisis in Puerto Rico. We hope Congress will pass this bill and build upon it in the future by eliminating the current Medicaid funding caps for U.S. territories.
- **Strengthen postpartum Medicaid coverage:** The Partnership applauds inclusion of a state option to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage in the American Rescue Plan Act. We urge Congress to build on this down payment to ensure that all individuals whose pregnancies are covered by Medicaid can keep their Medicaid coverage for at least one year postpartum.

More broadly, **we encourage Congress to both ensure health equity in Medicaid policies and use Medicaid as an effective tool to mitigate health disparities.** As a partnership committed to improving and expanding the Medicaid program, we stand ready to work with Congress to prevent the marginalization of minority populations in the health care system while simultaneously supporting the providers and entities committed to ending disparities and dismantling the structures that enable them to persist. This work could include streamlining processes and providing new pathways for Medicaid to address social determinants of health. Congress should further pursue innovations in Medicaid that strengthen the program's capacity to provide quality care to diverse populations, enabling the program

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation. Medicare-to-Medicaid Fee Index. <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/medicaid-to-medicare-fee-index/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>. Accessed June 2, 2021.

to continue to evolve with their needs. We look forward to working with Congress and the administration in pursuit of these innovations.

Additionally, enclosed in this letter, please find a copy of the Partnership's Medicaid principles. We hope lawmakers will keep these principles in mind as you develop health care policy related to infrastructure or other legislative priorities.

The Partnership looks forward to working with Congress to preserve and strengthen the Medicaid program through this uncertain time and support its vital role as a safety net for millions of Americans. If you have questions or seek any additional information, please contact Jonathan Westin at the Jewish Federations of North America, First Co-Chair of the Partnership for Medicaid at Jonathan.Westin@jewishfederations.org or partnershipformedicaid@gmail.com.

Thank you for your attention to this request and for your diligent stewardship of the Medicaid program.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Community Affiliated Plans
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Family Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Dental Association
American Dental Education Association
American Health Care Association
American Network of Community Options & Resources (ANCOR)
America's Essential Hospitals
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Children's Hospital Association
Easterseals
The Jewish Federations of North America
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Counties
National Association of Rural Health Clinics
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Rural Health Association