

February 16, 2017

Chairman Greg Walden
United States House of Representatives
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Frank Pallone
United States House of Representatives
237 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone:

As organizations deeply invested in the health and well-being of children involved in the child welfare system, we urge you to ensure that youth who age out of foster care have continued access to Medicaid coverage until the age of 26. This is a vital provision of the Affordable Care Act that has benefitted tens-of-thousands of youth and has helped to improve overall outcomes for this population.

Under current law, youth who age out of foster care, and were enrolled in Medicaid prior to aging out, are eligible for Medicaid coverage until the age of 26. This provision was drafted as an equitable response to children being allowed to stay on their parent's insurance policy until age 26 under the Affordable Care Act. Foster youth do not have the benefit to stay on their parent's health insurance, as they are removed from their own homes and placed in the custody of the state. Recent Adoption & Foster Care Statistics (AFCARS) data shows that over 20,000 children age out of the child welfare system each year. These youths are then faced with the arduous task of navigating the transition into adulthood, often with very little support from other adults or mentors.

In addition, high-quality, coordinated health care is fundamentally important for children and youth who have been involved in the child welfare system because they tend to have high rates of acute and chronic medical, mental health and developmental problems. According to the Congressional Research Service, 30-60 percent have at least one chronic or acute health condition, such as asthma, cognitive abnormalities, visual and auditory problems, dental decay, and malnutrition, and 57 percent of youth in foster care also meet the criteria for a mental disorder and may need mental health treatment. Investments in the health coverage of former foster youth must continue as youth transition into adulthood so that they can continue to thrive on their own.

Furthermore, youth who age out of care have an increased likelihood of experiencing economic and housing instability, and consistent and continued health coverage can help avert additional costs to these youths and communities. Helping youth manage their conditions and prevent medical exacerbations result in reduced hospital stays and emergency room visits.

The Medicaid to 26 for former foster youth provision has been an important tool for young adults to achieve self-sufficiency and successfully transition into adulthood. We respectfully ask that you not take away health coverage for this group of young people.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Adopt America Network
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families
American Academy of Pediatrics
Association for Clinicians for the Underserved
Case Western Reserve University, Shubert Center for Child Studies
Center for Autism and Related Disorders
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Child and Family Policy Center
Child Welfare League of America
Children Now
Children's Defense Fund
Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute
Every Child Matters
Family Voices
First Focus Campaign for Children
Foster Club
Foster Family-based Treatment Association
Housing Works
Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services
International Center for Assault Prevention
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Lutheran Services in America
March of Dimes
National Association for Children of Alcoholics
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Association of Social Workers
National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
National Center on Adoption and Permanency
National Center for Youth Law
National Foster Parent Association
National Foster Youth Institute
National Juvenile Justice Network
National Health Law Program
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Ray E. Helfer Society/Children's National
The North American Council on Adoptable Children
The Salvation Army
Voice for Adoption
Young Invincibles
Youth Law Center

Youth Leadership Advisory Team
Youth Services Network
Youth Valley House
Youth Villages

Arizona

Children's Action Alliance

California

American Academy of Pediatrics, California
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California School-Based Health Alliance
Casa de Amparo
CASA of Alameda County
Chadwick Center for Children and Families
East Bay Children's Law Offices
Family Care Network, Inc
First Congregational UCC Church
Foster Youth in Action
Fred Finch Youth Center
Peace and Justice Network
The Children's Partnership
The Junior League of San Diego
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
Youth Engagement Project

Colorado

The Adoption Exchange

Connecticut

Connecticut Voices for Children
RESULTS, Connecticut

Delaware

Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families
Unitarian Universalists Association

Florida

Florida Legal Services
Florida Youth Shine/Foster Youth in Action
Immokalee Multicultural Multi Purpose Community Action Agency
Prevent Child Abuse, Florida
Riverside Avenue Christian Church

Georgia

Birth Defects Research & Education Foundation
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Georgia Alliance to End Homelessness
Georgia EmpowerMENT
HOSEA HELPS
Voices to Georgia's Children

Hawaii

Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies of Hawaii

Illinois

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
Health Connect One
HEAR US Inc.
Kewanee Area United Way
Metropolitan Family Services
Provincial Council of the Clerics of St. Viator

Indiana

Indiana Association of Resources & Child Advocacy
Phoenix Institute
United Way of LaPorte County

Iowa

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Great Des Moines

Kansas

Kansas Appleseed
Dominican Sisters Ministry of Presence
FosterAdopt Connect, Kansas

Kentucky

Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children, Inc.
Kentucky Voices for Health
Kentucky Youth Advocates
Graves County Child Advocacy Program
Special Needs Adoption Program

Louisiana

United Way of Northwest Louisiana

Maine

Community Dental

Massachusetts

Association for Behavioral Healthcare
Center for Human Development
Children's League of Massachusetts
Community Action Agency of Somerville
Friends of Children Inc.
Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Massachusetts Peace Action
Northshore Education Consortium
Roxbury Youthworks, Inc

Maryland

Advocates for Children and Youth
Center for Adoption Support and Education
Diakon, Maryland
Door to HealthCare
Peter Cares House
Public Justice Center

Michigan

Fostering Success Michigan
Michigan's Children
Spaulding for Children
Transition to Independence Program

Minnesota

AspireMN
Connections to Independence
Sherburne County Area United Way

Missouri

Cornerstones of Care
Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louis
Foster Adopt Connect of Missouri
L & C Ministries
Missouri Children's Leadership Council
Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies
Presbyterian Children's Home and Services
St. Louis Center for Family Development
Vision for Children at Risk

Montana

Indian People's Action

Nebraska

Nebraska Appleseed
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Voices for Children in Nebraska

Nevada

Baby's Bounty
Children's Advocacy Alliance
Clinica Sierra Vista
Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth

New Hampshire

Monadnock Healthy Teeth to Toes

New Jersey

Advocates for Children of New Jersey
Children's Aid and Family Services
Collier Youth Services
Court Appointed Special Advocates of New Jersey, Inc.
Grandma K.A.R.E.S., Inc.
HOPES CAP, Inc
Hudson County CASA
KinderSmile Foundation
New Jersey Association on Correction
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies
New Jersey School- Age Care Coalition
NJ Child Placement Advisory Council
North Jersey Elks Developmental Disabilities Agency
Paterson Alliance
Peace and Justice Committee of Unitarian Society of Ridgewood
Ranch Hope
RESULTS, New Jersey
South Ward Children's Alliance
The Children's Home Society of NJ
Trenton Area Soup Kitchen
Union County Youth Advisory Board
Unitarian Society of Ridgewood
Visiting Nurse Association Health Group

New Mexico

New Mexico Voices for Children
NM Child Advocacy Networks

New York

American Academy of Pediatrics, New York Chapter
American Association of University Women of New York
Behavioral Health Services North, Inc.
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Community Maternity Services
Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies
Daughters of Charity, NY
Democracy for New York City
Lawyers for Children
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
The Children's Agenda
The Children's Village
Visiting Neighbors
Westchester Children's Association

North Carolina

Action Pathways, Inc
Children First
Diaper Bank of North Carolina
Easter Seals, North Carolina
Nazareth Child & Family Connection
PORT Health Services

Ohio

Healthy Fathering Collaborative
Ohio Guidestone
Toledo Area Jobs with Justice & Interfaith Worker Justice Coalition
Universal Health Care Action of Ohio
Voices for Ohio's Children
Waiting Child Fund

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Institute for Children Advocacy

Oregon

Building Bridges Network
Health Share of Oregon
Oregon Pediatric Society
Siuslaw Area Partnership to Prevent Substance Abuse

Pennsylvania

Allies for Children
Center for Children's Justice
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Diakon
Family Services of Western Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth and Family Services

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
The Village
Together We Rise
Unitarian Universalist PA Legislative Advocacy Network
Valley Youth House

Rhode Island

Adoption Rhode Island
Hasbro Children's Hospital
Rhode Island Kids Count

South Carolina

Greenville Health System
Palmetto Project
United Way of the Midlands

South Dakota

Lutheran Social Services

Tennessee

Black Children's Institute of Tennessee
Blount County Community Action Agency
CAREY Counseling Center, INC
Centerstone
Community Action Committee
Get Covered Tennessee
Living Grace
Monroe Harding, Inc
Tennessee Alliance for Children and Families
Tennessee CASA Association

Texas

Angel Reach, Inc
Center for Excellence for Children in State Custody
Community Youth Outreach
First Unitarian Church, Dallas
NASW Texas Chapter
Texans Care for Children
Texas Council on Adoptable Children
The Bridge Ministries

Utah

Voices for Utah Children

Virginia

Accountink Unitarian Universalist Church
CHIP of Virginia
Easter Seals, Virginia
Rock Spring United Church of Christ
South Action Linking Together (SALT)
Voices for Virginia's Children

Vermont

Voices for Vermont's Children

Washington

Foster Care Alumni of America, Washington Chapter
Partners for Our Children
ROOTS Young Adult Shelter
Seattle Children's Hospital
United Good Neighbors of Jefferson County

West Virginia

MODIFY, West Virginia University

Wisconsin

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin Community Services
Fostering Success-Stout University Foundation
Marshfield Child Advocacy Center
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families