

September 29, 2015

The Honorable Karen Bass  
408 Cannon HOB  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim McDermott  
1035 Longworth HOB  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Bass and McDermott:

As representatives of organizations committed to improving the health and wellbeing of our nation's children and families, we are writing to express our support for the Health Insurance for Former Foster Youth Act of 2015. This legislation removes a significant barrier to health coverage for young people aging out of foster care.

Recognizing the importance of health care coverage for youth who age out of foster care, Congress specifically provided Medicaid coverage for this population in the ACA. This provision equalizes coverage among young adults, placing young people aging out of foster care on par with their peers who are now able to stay on their parent's insurance until age 26.

The expansion of Medicaid to cover certain youth previously in foster care to age 26 is a significant victory for this population because it provides access to critical health coverage for an especially vulnerable group of young adults. Medicaid coverage will help young people become successful adults by ensuring that they, like their peers, have health care coverage and by removing barriers to success in post-secondary education and employment that can result from unexpected health care costs, unmet medical needs, and unaffordable insurance premiums or co-payments.

Not surprisingly, youth aging out of foster care experience poor health outcomes into adulthood, including high rates of drug and alcohol use, unplanned pregnancies and poor mental health outcomes. More than half of former foster youth report being uninsured, and more than one-fifth report unmet needs for medical care. Findings from the Midwest Study highlight that one-third of youth aging out reported two or more emergency room visits in the past year, 22 percent were hospitalized at least once, 43 percent were uninsured, fewer than half had dental insurance, three-quarters of young women had been pregnant, and 19 percent received mental or behavioral health care in the past year.

Given that former foster youth have well-documented and often significant health care needs, these young people should be eligible for Medicaid coverage in any state, and once enrolled, should be able to retain their coverage irrespective of changes in residency. Yet in their interpretation of the statute, CMS gave states the option to cover youth under this group who were in foster care and Medicaid in any state at the relevant point in time, but did not require that they do so. As a result, to date, only 13 states have taken up the option to extend coverage to youth who age out in another state.

Unfortunately, with a majority of states opting to not cover youth aging out in other states, many young people will be left without essential medical coverage. It is critical that we remove any barriers to coverage for young people aging out of care, and that includes removing the eligibility restriction tied to residency. The Health Insurance for Former Foster Youth Act of 2015 does just that.

We thank you for your leadership in introducing this legislation and believe that it has the potential to help thousands of former foster youth obtain essential health coverage, pursue promising opportunities and build better lives and futures.

We look forward to working with you in the future to continue to promote such efforts aimed at improving the wellbeing of all our nation's children.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Advocates for Children and Youth (Maryland)  
Advocates for Children of New Jersey  
Advocates for Youth (District of Columbia)  
Alliance for a Just Society  
Allies for Children (Pennsylvania)  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Psychological Association  
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families  
AIDS Resource Center Ohio  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles (California)  
Asian Law Alliance  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Boys Town  
California Children's Hospital Association  
California School Boards Association  
Carmella Rose Health Foundation (Ohio)  
CASA New Orleans (Louisiana)  
Center for the Study of Social Policy  
Child and Family Policy Center (Iowa)  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children and Families First (Delaware)  
Children Now (California)  
Children's Action Alliance (Arizona)

Children's Advocacy Alliance (Nevada)  
Children's Aid Society  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's Defense Fund - Texas  
Children's Home + Aid (Illinois)  
Children's Home Society of America  
Children's Hospital Los Angeles  
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin  
Citizen's Committee for Children (New York)  
Colorado School Medicaid Consortium  
Connecticut Voices for Children  
Cornerstones of Care (Missouri)  
Corporation for Supportive Housing  
County Welfare Directors Association of California  
Covenant House  
Covering Kentucky Kids and Families  
Elev8  
Family & Children's Service of Niagara (New York)  
Family Voices Indiana  
Family Voices NJ (New Jersey)  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Florida Legal Services, Inc.  
Florida's Children First  
Foster Care Alumni of America-Washington Chapter (FCAA-WA)  
Foster Family-Based Treatment Association  
Futures Without Violence  
Georgia Rural Urban Summit  
Global Justice Institute  
God's Will In Action (Missouri & Kansas)  
Great Circle (Missouri)  
Health Care for All NC (North Carolina)  
Health Care for All-Washington (HCFA-WA)  
Iowa Mental Health Planning Council  
John Burton Foundation  
Juvenile Law Center (Pennsylvania)  
Kentucky Equal Justice Center  
Lesbian Health Initiative of Houston, Inc. (Texas)  
Louisiana Association of Children and Family Agencies

Louisiana Children.org  
Louisiana Progress Action  
Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri  
Lutheran Services in America  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Metropolitan Community Churches  
Michigan's Children  
Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association (Missouri and Kansas)  
Missouri Children's Leadership Council  
MOLAR coalition (Maricopa County Oral Health Leaders, Advocates and Resources) (Arizona)  
NAMI Greater Des Moines (Iowa)  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
National Association of County Human Services Administrators  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Center on Adoption and Permanency  
Nebraska Appleseed  
Nebraska Families Collaborative  
New Hampshire Pediatric Society (NHPS)  
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addictions Agencies, Inc.  
New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare  
North American Council on Adoptable Children  
North Dakota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Northwest Health Law Advocates (Washington)  
One Voice Texas  
Partners for Our Children (Washington)  
Partnership for America's Children  
Peace Action of Staten Island (New York)  
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
PICO Center for Health Organizing  
Posada (Colorado)  
Presbyterian Children's Home and Services of Missouri – St. Louis Region  
Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey  
Provincial Council of the Clerics of St. Viator (Viatorians)  
Public Justice Center  
Public Policy Center of Mississippi  
Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (Washington)

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT (Rhode Island)  
Ryan-NENA Community Health Center (New York)  
San Francisco Health Plan (California)  
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law (Illinois)  
School Social Work Association of America  
Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western Reserve University  
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (New York)  
Social Action Linking Together (SALT) (Virginia)  
SparkAction  
St. Louis Family and Community Partnership (Missouri)  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (New Jersey)  
Texans Care for Children  
The Alliance for Children's Rights  
The American Orthopsychiatric Association  
The Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption & Medical Assistance (AAICAMA )  
The Children's Advocacy Institute  
The Children's Agenda (New York)  
The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, New York City  
The Michigan League for Public Policy  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
The National Association of Counsel For Children  
The National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy  
The National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association  
The NYS Academy of Pediatrics (New York)  
The Mockingbird Society (Washington)  
The Youth Law Center (California)  
Treatment Communities of America  
UHCAN Ohio  
United Way of California  
United Way of Garland County, Hot Springs (Arkansas)  
United Way of Missoula County (Montana)  
United Way of Thurston County (Washington)  
Utah Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Vision for Children at Risk (Missouri)  
Voice for Adoption  
Voices for Children in Nebraska

Voices for Ohio's Children  
Voices for Utah Children  
Voices for Vermont's Children  
Voices for Virginia's Children  
VOICES Youth Centers of California  
Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Washington Community Action Network  
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families  
Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice (Missouri)  
Youth and Shelter Services, Inc. (Iowa)  
Youth in Need (Missouri)  
Youth Villages