

February 16, 2017

Chairman Lamar Alexander  
United States Senate  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

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