

April 8, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone Ranking
Member House Committee on Energy and
Commerce United States House of
Representatives Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, we are writing to express our support for the "At-Risk Youth Medicaid Protection Act" (H.R. 1925).

This legislation addresses the ongoing challenges faced by juvenile justice-involved youth to receive adequate medical and behavioral health services upon their return to their communities. Studies estimate that some 50-75% of such youth are facing serious mental health or substance use disorders when they enter juvenile justice facilities. Upon return home, they are invariably in need of continued treatment for any number of significant mental and physical health care issues.

Yet, many states frequently terminate Medicaid coverage for juvenile justice-involved youth when they enter the system and maintain the termination even when they're released. This leaves them without critical mental health and medical services at a time when they need them the most, further undermining their efforts to achieve a successful transition.

By prohibiting states from terminating Medicaid coverage for eligible youth while they are in custody, this legislation provides them with a critical and necessary protection. It extends this protection by ensuring that they are enrolled in Medicaid upon their release from the system and reentry into society. We fully support the thoughtful, incisive approach detailed in this legislation.

As an organization committed to the well-being and safety of all children in the United States we urge the passage of this important legislation. We are pleased to hear that it is being considered in the context of our nation's opioid epidemic, and we believe it will make our communities safer and healthier. Should you have any questions, please contact Carrie Fitzgerald at CarrieF@firstfocus.org. We look forward to working with you to improve the well-being of America's children and youth.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President