

Partnership for Medicaid

June 6, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

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

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Representative Boehner:

The undersigned members of the Partnership for Medicaid – a coalition of safety net health care providers – urge immediate action to finalize legislation to delay the implementation of a series of seven regulations impacting Medicaid beneficiaries and providers. We are deeply concerned that some policies called for by the Administration threaten the ability of low-income individuals and families to access care through the Medicaid program.

The proposed and current Medicaid regulations and guidance by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) reduce reimbursement to safety net providers, limit the scope of services to beneficiaries, and shift additional Medicaid costs to states and counties when many already face budget shortfalls. The combined effect of these actions could result in significantly fewer low-income individuals and families receiving services under this important program.

We also urge the Congress to repeal CMS' August 17 SCHIP policy directive. It is our belief – and the opinion of the Government Accountability Office and the Congressional Research Service - that the issuance of the original letter was unlawful given the lack of notice and comment rulemaking as required by the Administrative Procedures Act. It is our further belief that states should continue to be given the authority to provide coverage to needy children and the discretion to determine appropriate eligibility levels. Limiting states' ability to cover needy children above 250% of the federal poverty level denies children access to comprehensive and quality health services that they otherwise will not receive from other sources, including private sector coverage.

To that end, we strongly urge Congress to immediately enact legislation to ensure that all these measures do not go into effect, using the Supplemental Appropriations Act or any other legislative means. Failure to enact any of these moratoria in the near future will greatly impact the Medicaid program. Thank you for your consideration of our views. We look forward to working with you on behalf of the more than 55 million recipients who rely on Medicaid for vital coverage, and the providers who serve them. Should you have any questions about these or other issues please feel free to contact any of our organizations or call Thomas L. Johnson, Executive Director, Medicaid Health Plans of America, at (202) 857-5725.

Sincerely,

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS
AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS AND GYNECOLOGISTS
ASSOCIATION OF CLINICIANS FOR THE UNDERSERVED
ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY AFFILIATED PLANS
MEDICAID HEALTH PLANS OF AMERICA
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HOSPITALS & HEALTH SYSTEMS
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE
NATIONAL HISPANIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
AFL-CIO