

June 7, 2018

Dear Director Norwood and Secretary Dimas,

As organizations working closely with the Medicaid population in our state, we write today to strongly request that the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services and the Department of Human Services temporarily suspend Medicaid auto-terminations in the Integrated Eligibility System (IES).

We recognize the potential for efficiencies in the IES system but current performance issues have caused a level of disruption in health coverage that is seriously harming the health and well-being of Illinoisans who rely on Medicaid. While our collective goal is the same as yours – to ensure redeterminations are accurate and eligible Medicaid enrollees keep their coverage – the volume of apparently inappropriate terminations by IES of eligible individuals and families is wreaking havoc on their access to care.

As we are all keenly aware, Medicaid coverage is foundational to the health and well-being of millions of people in Illinois. The services Medicaid provides are critical and any loss of coverage can destabilize the health of those who depend on the program for their care. Unfortunately, since the rollout of the new IES system, we have collectively seen thousands of cases where individuals lose benefits at redetermination through no fault of their own. We have heard hundreds of stories of families spending hours at their FCRC, distressed about lost faxes and mail, only to still lose critical benefits. We have seen inappropriate termination lead to delayed diagnostic tests, skipped well-child visits, missed vaccinations, cancelled surgeries, disrupted medication regimens, and countless other lost opportunities to remain healthy. Our now daily experiences with these issues have led us to strongly urge that you must take immediate action to address these problems while a longer-term solution is developed.

As we understand the situation, various systematic challenges within the FCRCs and Central Scanning Unit, and in HFS and DHS, have led to the increase in inappropriate cancellations. These problems include:

- 1) A backlog in scanning applicant documents;
- 2) Mailroom issues with auto-envelope openers;
- 3) Slow performance, errors, and other user-end glitches by IES;
- 4) Increased case manager workload due to manually converting cases from the legacy system;
- 5) Limited staffing for processing documents; and
- 6) Limited channels of communication for customers with the Medical Management Unit and FCRCs to resolve redetermination administrative challenges and discrepancies.

These problems are all preventing the processing of redetermination documents prior to the initiation of an auto-termination, leading to the systematic termination of eligible people who have followed reapplication guidelines. Disruption in health coverage can be a matter of life and death and inaction in the face of thousands of inappropriate cancellations of coverage is

unacceptable. We have confidence that over time, the state will address these challenges and other problems arising from this process, but the scope of the problems and the severity of the impact on people requires a temporary suspension of auto-cancellation until the challenges are resolved.

A complicating and related factor is accessing Manage My Case. While many individuals should be able to upload documentation for redetermination through this portal, the cumbersome process of proving identity prevents many from linking their account to Manage My Case. For many individuals, such as immigrants, those without credit history, people with disabilities, and people who are homeless, the current verification requirements are impossible to meet. The use of alternative measures, such as email verification, would help these individuals access Manage My Case, facilitate greater use of the portal, and address many of the capacity issues the state is experiencing.

It is important to note that our appeal for action is a response to what we have directly seen working with thousands of eligible people across Illinois who are losing one of their most fundamental needs—health insurance coverage and access to health care. Until the systematic challenges have been addressed, we demand that HFS and DHS, as agents of the state, fulfill their duty to the people of Illinois in implementing all parts of the Medicaid program, including responsible execution of enrollment and auto-termination. You have the power prevent improper terminations by temporarily suspending auto-terminations and thus to prevent the incredible harm we see in our work every day. We urge you to use that power to ensure that the people of Illinois can get the health care services they need to remain healthy.

Sincerely,

ACA Consumer Advocacy
Access Living
Access Services of Northern Illinois
Action for a Better Tomorrow
Age Options Advocacy Task Force
AgeOptions
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Alliance for Community Services
American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)
Apostolic Christian LifePoints, Inc.
Association House of Chicago
Avenues to Independence
Baby TALK, Inc.
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
Center for Community Academic Success Partnerships
Champaign County Health Care Consumers
Chicago Department of Family & Support Services
Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition
Chicago House and Social Service Agency
Chicago Women's AIDS Project
Chicagoland Leadership Council

Children's Home and Aid
Citizen Action/Illinois
City of Rockford Human Services
CJE SeniorLife
Clearbrook
Community Behavioral Healthcare Association of Illinois
Community Service Options, Inc.
Community Support Systems
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Disability Resource Center
Don Moss & Associates
E-Town Wellness
Easterseals Central Illinois
Ecker Center
Envision Unlimited
Erie Family Health Centers
Erikson Institute
Esperanza Health Centers
EverThrive Illinois
Family Service and Mental Health Center of Cicero
Family Voices of Illinois
Gift of Voice
Greater Chicago Food Depository
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
Health Justice Project, Beazley Institute for Health Law & Policy, Loyola University Chicago School of Law
Heartland Alliance
Heartland Health Centers
Howard Brown Health
ICIRR
Illinois 123GO
Illinois Academy of Family Physicians
Illinois Action for Children
Illinois Association for Behavioral Health
Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health
Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Illinois Collaboration on Youth
Illinois Hunger Coalition
Illinois Parents of Adults with Developmental Disabilities (IPADD)
Illinois Partners for Human Service
Illinois Primary Health Care Association
Illinois Public Health Association
Illinois Township Association of Senior Citizens Services Committees (ITASCSC)
Indivisible Lincoln Square
Indivisible Oak Park Area
Indivisible Peoria Area
Inner City Muslim Action Network
Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago
Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center
Lambs Farm

Legal Council for Health Justice
Livingston County Mental Health Board
Local 4 SEIU Health & Welfare Fund
McManus Consulting: Disability Services
Memorial Behavioral Health
Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force
MFTD Waiver Families
Midwest Asian Health Association
NAMI Chicago
NAMI Illinois
National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Illinois Chapter
National Kidney Foundation of Illinois
Next Steps, NFP
North Shore Senior Center
Northeastern IL Area Agency on Aging
Oak-Leyden Developmental Services
Open Door Clinic of Greater Elgin
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Palatine Township Senior Citizens Council
Pediatric AIDS Chicago Prevention Initiative
Popovits Law Group
PrimeCare Community Health
Protect Our Care Illinois
Ray Graham Association
Rosecrance
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Seniors Assistance Center
Smart Policy Works
Supportive Housing Providers Association
Susan G Komen Chicago
The Arc of Illinois
The Douglas Center
Thresholds
Trinity Services, Inc.
United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
Voices for Illinois Children
Young Invincibles
YWCA Metropolitan Chicago

CC: Christopher Kantas, Office of the Governor
Representative Greg Harris
Representative Robyn Gabel
Representative Patty Bellock
Representative Tom Demmer
Senator Heather Steans
Senator Dale Righter