September 15, 2017

To the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation:

As Congress reconvenes this fall, there are a series of deadlines that have significance in maintaining access to health insurance coverage and care for Pennsylvania families. We urge you and the other members of the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation to work to provide certainty for patients and providers by extending funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP); continuing cost-sharing reduction (CSR) payments; supporting care to vulnerable patient populations through community health centers, small and rural hospitals, and safety-net providers; and protecting the Medicaid program.

Without Congressional action, funding for CHIP will expire on September 30. In Pennsylvania, more than 176,000 children rely on CHIP for affordable, comprehensive health care coverage. Because of CHIP and Medicaid, 95 percent of children in Pennsylvania have health insurance coverage. Children who have health insurance are more likely to avoid preventable illnesses, benefit from early detection and prompt treatment, and receive the behavioral health care services they need. That means healthier kids, stronger families, and more effective use of health care resources. **We urge you to provide stability for low-income children and families by extending CHIP.**

More than half a million Pennsylvanians access insurance through the individual market. CSR payments help support coverage for individuals with incomes between 100 and 250 percent of the federal poverty level who purchase coverage through the health insurance marketplace. According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 57 percent of Pennsylvania’s insurance marketplace enrollees benefit from CSR payments.

These CSR payments are crucial in maintaining access to a robust, competitive individual market, and protecting Pennsylvania consumers from steep premium increases. Pennsylvania has cautioned that if federal cost-sharing payments are discontinued, Pennsylvania’s five individual market insurers could be forced to raise their 2018 policy year rates by an average of 20.3 percent.
We urge Congress to provide certainty within the individual market by guaranteeing CSR funding through 2018. That stability will help support the health and financial security of hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians, and greater economic certainty in communities across the commonwealth.

Finally, we call your attention to key resources that support care for vulnerable communities—the Community Health Center Fund (CHC), the Medicare Dependent Hospital (MDH) program and Low-Volume (LV) Adjustment, and disproportionate share hospital (DSH) payments. We urge Congress to address the funding cliff for health centers, provide for the extension of key rural hospital payments, and delay Medicaid DSH cuts. Without Congressional action, community health centers could see a funding cut of up to 70 percent. One in 16 Pennsylvanians receive care through more than 300 CHC sites in 52 counties across the state. Similarly, small and rural hospitals depend on MDH and LV payments to preserve access to care in the face of challenging dynamics—smaller numbers of beds, fewer admissions, and patients and communities with older demographics. Medicaid DSH payments are crucial to supporting the safety net that ensures low-income individuals and vulnerable communities get the care they need. Impending cuts will jeopardize the stability of that support system.

As this group has shared in previous communications to the delegation, Medicaid serves as the foundation of access to care for 2.8 million Pennsylvanians—children, pregnant women, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. Proposals to restructure the Medicaid financing system could serve to dramatically reduce Medicaid coverage and strain resources for this critical program.
We urge the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation to maintain funding for the current Pennsylvania Medicaid program and protect the vulnerable citizens who rely on Medicaid for critical and necessary care.

Thank you for your service to our state, and for your thoughtful consideration of avenues to preserve coverage and promote a healthier Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Allegheny County Medical Society
Alliance of Health Care Providers
American Academy of Pediatrics, Pennsylvania Chapter
Health Federation of Philadelphia
Healthcare Council of Western Pennsylvania
Kids Smiles
LeadingAge PA
Pennsylvania American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Pennsylvania Association of Certified Nurse-Midwives
Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers
Pennsylvania Association of Nurse Anesthetists
Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers’ Society, Inc.
Pennsylvania Chiropractic Association
Pennsylvania Coalition for Oral Health
Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners
Pennsylvania College of Emergency Physicians
Pennsylvania Dental Association
Pennsylvania Homecare Association
Pennsylvania Medical Society
Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society
Pennsylvania Rural Health Association
Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants
Pennsylvania State Nurses Association
Rehabilitation & Community Providers Association
Safety-Net Association of Pennsylvania
The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania
The Urban Health Care Coalition of Pennsylvania