

July 20, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Request for Action on Pending Section 1115 Demonstrations to Reduce Racial Disparities

Dear Secretary Azar,

The 279 undersigned organizations, which include Medicaid advocates, patient groups, and provider organizations, are writing to urge you to take action on certain pending section 1115 demonstrations to address racial disparities and years of systematic racism. One consequence of the systemic racism highlighted by the pandemic and nationwide protests against racial inequality and injustices is the health disparities faced by Black people in general, and Black women in particular. Medicaid, which provides coverage for over 70 million people with low incomes who -- due to systemic racism and barriers to care -- are disproportionately people of color, has an unmatched opportunity to reduce these disparities. We urge you to take two immediate steps with respect to Medicaid section 1115 demonstrations that will work to mitigate racial disparities rather than making them worse.

First, to avoid policies that increase racial disparities, it is imperative that you ensure that section 1115 demonstrations do no harm. In particular, *we ask you to immediately reject pending proposals to impose punitive work requirements on parents with very low incomes in Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and South Dakota.* In comments on these demonstrations and previous letters to you, many of us have pointed out that these proposals exclusively target very poor parents, who are mostly women with loss of their health insurance and that they also threaten children's well-being.¹ Data from two states with pending requests underscore how these punitive proposals put Black families at risk: In Mississippi, 71 percent of the parents who would be at risk of losing their health insurance are Black, as compared to 37 percent of the state's population.² In Alabama, 58 percent of the parents affected are Black, compared to 26.5 percent of the state's population.³ Imposing work requirements on these parents is bad policy in the best of times, but it is unconscionable in the midst of a pandemic, a deep recession, and widespread recognition of structural racism.

Second, to enable Medicaid to do more to reduce racial disparities, we urge you to swiftly approve pending and future state section 1115 demonstration proposals to extend postpartum coverage to reduce maternal and infant mortality. As you know, maternal mortality is on the rise in the United States, and Black women are three to four times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related death than white women. It is estimated that one-third of these deaths occur between 1 week and 12

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics et al, "Re: Requests to Impose Work-Reporting Requirements on Very Low-Income Parents." Received by Secretary Alex Azar, March 6, 2019, <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Impact-of-work-requirements-on-parents-and-families-3-6-19-11.pdf>.

² Joan Alker et al, "How Mississippi's Proposed Medicaid Work Requirement Would Affect Low-Income Families with Children," Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, August 2018, <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MS-work-requirements-update-rev-10-5.pdf>.

³ Joan Alker et al, "The Impact of Alabama's Proposed Medicaid Work Requirement on Low-Income Families with Children," Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, August 2018, <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/AL-Work-Requirements-update-8-18.pdf>.

months after delivery. While Medicaid already plays a vital role in reducing maternal health disparities by paying for two thirds of all births to Black women and ensuring access to care, extending coverage up to one full year after delivery would guarantee continuous coverage when women are still at high risk for pregnancy-related complications and death. There are several states who are committed to addressing maternal health disparities and whose waivers should be approved. Illinois, which has a pending request to extend Medicaid postpartum coverage to twelve months, has *maternal mortality rates that are a shocking six times higher for Black women as compared to White women*. Illinois, New Jersey (which also has a pending request), and other states should be given the opportunity to test whether extending Medicaid coverage can reduce the maternal death rate for populations at highest risk, including women with low incomes and communities of color.

Section 1115 demonstrations can be a force for health equity rather than a way to perpetuate structural racism. The Department of Health & Human Services has the power to change their current trajectory. We urge you to do so.

If you need any additional information, please contact Joan Alker at jca25@georgetown.edu.

CC: Seema Verma, Judith Cash

National Organizations

A Better Balance
Academic Pediatric Association
AFL-CIO
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families
Alliance for Early Success
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Physicians
American Heart Association
American Liver Foundation
American Lung Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Pediatric Society
American Physical Therapy Association
Arthritis Foundation
Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Black Mamas Matter Alliance
Center for Children's Initiatives
Center for Law and Social Policy
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Children's Defense Fund

Children's Health Fund
Community Catalyst
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Epilepsy Foundation
Essential Access Health
Every Mother Counts
Families USA
Family Voices
First Focus on Children
Georgetown University Center for Children and Families
Guttmacher Institute
HealthNet
HealthyWomen
Hemophilia Federation of America
HOPES CAP, Inc.
Johnson & Johnson
Justice in Aging
Legal Action Center
Legal Voice
March for Moms
March of Dimes
Maternity Care Coalition
Melinated Moms
Mended Hearts & Mended Little Hearts
Mental Health America
Mom Congress
MomsRising
NAACP
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network
National Center for Children in Poverty
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Council on Independent Living
National Employment Law Project
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Immigration Law Center
National Institute for Children's Health Quality
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Partnership for Women & Families

National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Psoriasis Foundation
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Partnership for America's Children
Pediatric Policy Council
PFLAG National
Preeclampsia Foundation
Primary Care Development Corporation
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need
Restoring Our Own Through Transformation
Service Employees International Union
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
Society for Women's Health Research
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
Spinning Babies®
The AIDS Institute
The Arc of the United States
The Chocolate Milk Cafe National
The Jewish Federations of North America
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Ounce of Prevention Fund
The Southern Poverty Law Center
The Women's Centers
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
United Way Worldwide
Women of Reform Judaism
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
Young Invincibles
ZERO TO THREE
1,000 Days
9to5, National Association of Working Women

State Organizations and Individuals

Academy of Family Physicians – Alabama
Academy of Family Physicians – Illinois
Advocacy Action Network (Kentucky)
Advocates for Children of New Jersey
African American Babies Integrated High Risk Pregnancy Initiative (Minnesota)
AIDS Alabama
AIDS Foundation Chicago (Illinois)
Alabama Arise
Alaska Children's Trust
Allies for Children (Pennsylvania)

American Academy of Pediatrics – Florida Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics – Illinois Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics – Mississippi Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics – New Jersey Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics – Tennessee Chapter
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists – Illinois Section
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists – New Jersey Section
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists – Oklahoma Section
Ann Marie Sailsman, Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor, Pace University
Any Baby Can (Texas)
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
Baby, Please Birth Services (New Jersey)
Beckett Family Consultant
BLB Productions
Brick Education Network (New Jersey)
Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers (New Jersey)
Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health at Montclair State University (New Jersey)
Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation, Harvard Law School (Massachusetts)
Central Jersey Family Health Consortium (New Jersey)
Chicago Public Schools, Office of Student Health and Wellness (Illinois)
Child and Family Policy Center (Iowa)
Children's Advocacy Alliance (Nevada)
Children's Defense Fund - New York
Children's Home & Aid (Illinois)
Children's Institute (Oregon)
Children's Action Alliance (Arizona)
Circle Up, United Methodist Women (Texas)
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
City of Newark Office of Comprehensive Community Education (New Jersey)
Clinton Hill Community Action (New Jersey)
Colorado Children's Campaign
Community Health Acceleration Partnership
Community Health Council of Wyandotte County (Kansas)
Community Service Society of NY
Denise V Rodgers, Vice Chancellor for Interpersonal Programs, Rutgers University
Enlace Chicago (Illinois)
Equal Hope (Illinois)
Erica Crawley, State Representative for Ohio's 26th House District
Erie Family Health Centers (Illinois)
EverThrive Illinois
Every Texan (formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities)
Faith in Action Alabama
Fall Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation Services (Alabama)
Family Connections (New Jersey)
Family Promise of Essex County (New Jersey)
Family Voices of New Jersey
First3Years (Texas)
Florida Health Justice Project

Florida Policy Institute
Gateway Community Action Partnership (New Jersey)
GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
Georgians for a Healthy Future
Giving Birth and Being Born Initiative, Montclair State University
Greater Newark Health Care Coalition (New Jersey)
Green Space Learning (Texas)
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group (Illinois)
Health Care for All New York
Health Federation of Philadelphia
Healthy Illinois Campaign
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia
Illinois Action for Children
Illinois Primary Health Care Association
Illinois Public Health Association
Independence: A Family of Services, Inc. (New Jersey)
Integrated Care for High Risk Pregnancies
Integrity House (New Jersey)
Iowa Association of Nurse Practitioners
Jackson Safer Childbirth Experience (Mississippi)
Johnson Group Consulting, Inc.
Kaleena Berryman, Preemie Parents Club
Kansas Action for Children
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition
Kentucky Center for Economic Policy
Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Kentucky Voices for Health
Kids Forward (Wisconsin)
Kids Win Missouri
Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center (Illinois)
Legal Council for Health Justice (Illinois)
Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin
Madison-area Urban Ministry (dba JustDane) (Wisconsin)
Maine Equal Justice
Maternal and Child Health Access (California)
Medical Advocacy & Outreach (Alabama)
Michelle Browne, Attorney at Law
Michigan Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health, excluding government associated members
Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
Minnesota Prenatal to Three Coalition
Mississippi Center for Justice
Mississippi Health Advocacy Program
Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Alabama Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Georgia Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Greater New York Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Illinois Chapter

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Massachusetts Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Minnesota Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – New Jersey Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – North Carolina Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Ohio Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Pennsylvania Delaware Valley Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners – Western New York Chapter
NBC Community Development Corporation (Kansas)
NC Child
New Jersey Association of Black Psychologists
New Jersey Black Women Physicians Association
New Jersey Head Start Association
New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute
Newark Department of Health & Community Wellness (New Jersey)
Newark Trust for Education (New Jersey)
Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy
Open Paths Counseling Center (California)
Our Children Oregon
PACER Center (Minnesota)
Partners for Our Children (Washington)
PAVE Family Voices of Washington
PediPlace (Texas)
Pennsylvania Head Start Association
Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey
Public Justice Center (Maryland)
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Rutgers School of Public Health (New Jersey)
Safiya Bashir LPC LLC (New Jersey)
Saint James Health, Inc (New Jersey)
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law (Illinois)
Six Dimensions (Mississippi)
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
South Ward Children's Alliance (New Jersey)
St. Michael's Medical Clinic (Alabama)
Summit Medical Group (New Jersey)
Sylvia Law, Professor Emerita NYU Law School
Tennessee Justice Center
Texans Care for Children
Texas Parent to Parent
Texas Pediatric Society
TexProtects (Texas)
The Children's Partnership (California)
The Cultural Wellness Center (Minnesota)
The Gregory Thomas Foundation (New Jersey)
The Knights & Orchids Society (Alabama)
The Springboard Group, LLC
Thresholds (Illinois)

Trilogy Behavioral Healthcare (Illinois)
United Way for Greater Austin (Texas)
United Way for Greater Newark (New Jersey)
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas (Texas)
United Ways of Texas
Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey (New Jersey)
Voices for Children of San Antonio (Texas)
Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (New Jersey)
West Central Initiative (Minnesota)
West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Zadie's of the Oranges (New Jersey)
4CS of Passaic County (New Jersey)