July 12, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you continue negotiations with Congress on deficit reduction plans, we urge you to reject any attempt to produce savings through cuts to federal Medicaid funding. As organizations committed to advancing access to health care services for poor and low-income individuals, we are deeply concerned about the disastrous effects that such cuts will have for the most vulnerable Medicaid enrollees. Medicaid is the cornerstone of health care for low-income Americans; more than 58 million individuals are currently enrolled in Medicaid.

We continue to voice our strong opposition to proposals to block grant Medicaid or otherwise arbitrarily cap federal Medicaid expenditures. We are very appreciative of your stance in opposing these harmful measures. However, we also want to note our concerns with proposals for a single “blended” matching rate for all Medicaid and CHIP enrollees. If a blended rate is adopted as a method of obtaining reduced Medicaid expenditures, it would likely be as detrimental as a cap on overall Medicaid spending. Replacing the various matching rates with a single blended rate for each state will not constrain costs, but will only shift risks and costs to states, healthcare providers, and individuals. And since the proposal was developed to cut funding, any administrative efficiencies of having one matching rate will be offset by the need for states to cut eligibility, services or provider rates to come up with the projected savings. This sharp decrease in federal Medicaid funding could force many low-income people to go without essential health care services.

Further, we urge you to consider that any deficit reduction plan must include new revenues. Measures to reduce the national debt must be fair and balanced, with both spending cuts and revenue increases. While we agree that it is important to reduce our national debt, we must not decimate crucial programs providing services to the lowest income Americans. We thus oppose cuts to Medicaid that would reduce eligibility or services to seniors and their families, people with disabilities, children, and our most vulnerable citizens.

The goals of reducing the national deficit and improving public health are not mutually exclusive. Medicaid is essential to the health and well-being of millions of poor and low-income Americans, and to ensuring a healthy workforce and healthy children. We strongly urge you to pursue a balanced approach to reducing the deficit, while opposing significant cuts to funding for the Medicaid program.

Please do not hesitate to contact Cate Hodgetts at the National Health Law Program at 202-289-7661 or hodgetts@healthlaw.org with any questions.

Sincerely,
National Health Law Program

Advocates for Children & Youth
AIDS United
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Public Health Association
Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest
Asian American Justice Center, member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice
Asian Pacific American Legal Center, member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
California Academy of Family Physicians
California Black Women's Health Project
California Coverage & Health Initiatives
California Health Advocates
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Primary Care Association
California State Association of Counties
Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State
Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly
Center for Civil Justice
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
Center for Public Representation
Child Welfare League
Children Now
Clinica Sierra Vista
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Commission on the Public's Health System
Community Catalyst
Connecticut Association for Human Services
Connecticut Legal Services
Consumer Health Coalition
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Disability Policy Consortium
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Disability Rights Wisconsin
Empire Justice Center
Families USA
Family Care Council Area 9 (West Palm Beach)
First Focus
Florida Center for Fiscal and Economic Policy
Florida CHAIN (Community Health Action Information Network)
Florida Legal Services
Free Clinics of Michigan
Greater Hartford Legal Aid
Having Our Say Coalition
Health Care for America Now
Health & Disability Advocates
Hemophilia Federation of America
HIV Medicine Association
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Maine Equal Justice
Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative
Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Maternal and Child Health Access, Los Angeles
Medicaid Matters NY
Metro New York Health Care for All Campaign
Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
Michigan League for Human Services
Mid-Minnesota Legal Assistance
Missouri Budget Project
Missouri Jobs with Justice
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Council of Jewish Women, California Sections
National Education Association
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Immigration Law Center
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Respite Coalition
National Senior Citizens Law Center
National Women's Law Center
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
New York Association on Independent Living
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage
Ohio Poverty Law Center
PHI – Quality Care through Quality Jobs
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pennsylvania Health Law Project
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Progressive States Network
Public Justice Center
Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities
Raising Women’s Voices
RESULTS
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
TakeAction Minnesota
Transgender Law Center
United Spinal Association
Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio (UHCAN Ohio)
Virginia Organizing
Voices for America’s Children
VOR - Speaking out for people with intellectual disabilities