

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20515

August XX, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy,
AND

Dear Mr. President and Secretary Becerra,

Today, we write to respectfully request that the provision creating the federally administered Medicaid lookalike program from the *Medicaid Saves Lives Act*, S. 2315 and H.R. 4595, be included in the upcoming reconciliation package. We are thankful that providing support to Americans in non-expansion states and closing the coverage gap is a top priority and we believe this program will provide more Americans with quality, affordable health care coverage. Additionally, this is the most effective policy to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities and would be a major step towards decreasing the high rates of uninsured Americans in non-expansion states.

While the *American Rescue Plan Act* offered the 12 states that did not expand Medicaid under the *Affordable Care Act* (ACA) robust financial incentives to finally expand their state Medicaid programs, it has become increasingly clear that many of these states will not expand due to partisan obstruction. This means 2.2 million Americans in the coverage gap and a total of 4.4 million Americans with low incomes will continue to be denied health coverage as communities across the nation are still working hard to turn the corner on a once-in-a-century pandemic.¹

Additionally, across these states, the Americans who are most harmed by this inaction from state leaders are people of color: 60 percent of people in the coverage gap are Black, Hispanic, Asian, or Pacific Islander.² Many of the people in the coverage gap live in the South where state leaders

¹ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/federal-action-needed-to-close-medicaid-coverage-gap-extend-coverage-to-22-million> ; <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-coverage-gap-uninsured-poor-adults-in-states-that-do-not-expand-medicaid/>

² <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/federal-action-needed-to-close-medicaid-coverage-gap-extend-coverage-to-22-million>

continue to deny them provide basic health coverage, coverage that is available to 48 other states and DC.³

The *Medicaid Saves Lives Act* is legislation that would create a program almost identical to Medicaid that is administered by the federal government, and would allow Americans with low incomes living in states that have not expanded Medicaid a path to health coverage. The benefits of Medicaid are clear and unequivocal – Medicaid improves health outcomes, prevents premature deaths, reduces uncompensated care costs, prevents hospital closures, improves economic mobility, and provides people security of ongoing stable coverage. States that have expanded Medicaid have proven that Medicaid literally saves lives.

Unlike other paths to close the coverage gap, a federally administered Medicaid-like program would provide more robust benefits with lower out-of-pocket cost expectations not found in other plans. Therefore we urge you to include provisions closing the coverage gap that result in the creation of a Medicaid-like program administered by the federal government. As a result of the ACA, Medicaid must cover a wide range of services such as non-emergency medical transportation, prescription drug benefits, maternity and newborn care, hospital services, and preventative care specifically designed to support the needs of low-income individuals and prevent high out of pocket costs. This federal program must provide the same coverage, to ensure that individuals can access robust, comprehensive, and affordable coverage.

We do not believe that access to health coverage should be dependent on where you live and people should not be penalized for living in states that continue to deny them Medicaid. Now is the time for action. We must fulfill the promise we made 11 years ago when we passed the ACA – that all Americans in all 50 states who need it will be able to access Medicaid coverage. We cannot continue to allow Americans with low incomes to suffer any longer just because they live in a state that has refused to expand Medicaid for political reasons at the cost of residents' health and taxpayer dollars.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

³ Id.