

Partnership for Medicaid Partnership for Medicaid

News Release

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Contact: Jim Philipps; jphilipps@naco.org
202.942.4220

PARTNERSHIP FOR MEDICAID URGES HEALTH REFORM EFFORTS TO CONTINUE

STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF MEDICAID'S ROLE IN HEALTH SYSTEM

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Partnership for Medicaid, a national coalition of health care, local government, and labor organizations, today applauded the work of pro-health care reform lawmakers and urged them to continue their push for comprehensive legislation.

At a Capitol Hill briefing today, the Partnership for Medicaid stressed that during these tough economic times and lengthy period of high unemployment, millions more lower-income and disabled Americans depend on the Medicaid system for their health care. The non-partisan coalition – an alliance of 18 organizations representing doctors, health care providers, safety net health plans, counties, and labor – praised Congress' recognition of the importance of Medicaid when it voted to greatly expand the program in both the House and Senate health care reform bills.

Speaking at the briefing today were three congressional champions of Medicaid, Rep. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.), Rep. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), and Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Md.) Presentations were also made by representatives of four health care associations, as well as the mother of a child with special health care needs who relies on Medicaid.

The Partnership for Medicaid urged Congress and the administration to:

- expand Medicaid eligibility to include more low income Americans and families, as both the House- and Senate-passed reform bills would do;
- improve provider and health plan reimbursement rates;

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- address fraud and abuse, and
- preserve the federal guarantee of Medicaid coverage, services and consumer protections.

These are among the Partnership for Medicaid's 14 core principles adopted a year ago to ensure that Medicaid continues its vital role as a strong safety net for vulnerable Americans (See attachment).

The Partnership for Medicaid congressional briefing was entitled, "The State of Medicaid: Protecting and Improving America's Safety Net as Health Care is Reformed."

Representing the Partnership were Dr. Rhonique Harris from The National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions (NACHRI), Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director, American Public Health Association, and Dan Hawkins, senior vice president of programs and policy, National Association of Community Health Centers. Thomas Johnson, chair of the Partnership for Medicaid and President and CEO of Medicaid Health Plans of America, moderated the event.

Members of the coalition, individually and together, have been working with Congress to help shape critical Medicaid provisions in the House and Senate health care reform bills.

"The Partnership for Medicaid is grateful for how far Congress has come in reforming health care in America," Johnson said. "But clearly, the job is far from finished. We must continue to work together to make real reform a reality, especially for those who need it the most, low-income Americans who can benefit from an expansion of Medicaid. We believe that investments in Medicaid are investments in public health care.

"We intend to continue to work toward solidifying access and quality for all Medicaid enrollees by promoting fair payment for all Medicaid providers, ensuring that safety net providers are adequately reimbursed in the Medicaid program," Johnson said. "Preserving access to care for all Medicaid enrollees will ensure improvements in the health of our public."

The organizations who adopted the recommendations are as follows: the American Dental Association; the American Health Care Association; the American Public Health Association; the Association for Community Affiliated Plans; the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved; the Easter Seals; the Medicaid Health Plans of America; the National Association of Children's Hospitals; the National Association of Community Health Centers; the National Association of Counties; the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems; the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare; and the National Rural Health Association.

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The Partnership for Medicaid 14 core principles include:

1. Universal coverage and access;
2. Expand Medicaid eligibility for all Americans up to a certain level of poverty;
3. Preserve the federal guarantee of Medicaid coverage, services and consumer protections;
4. Improve provider and health plan reimbursement rates in Medicaid to ensure broad access and funding stability for safety net providers, including Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and ensure that new subsidized coverage plans adequately pay health care providers;
5. Retain DSH payments which preserve healthcare access for low-income patients;
6. Continue Graduate Medical Education (GME) payments to ensure a high quality and adequate physician workforce;
7. Strengthen Medicaid financing by adding an automatic countercyclical mechanism to increase the federal FMAP share in economic downturns;
8. Provide access to fair pharmaceutical pricing;
9. Maintain state flexibility and continue Medicaid as a testing ground for innovation;
10. Simplify enrollment procedures and encourage outreach to eligible but un-enrolled individuals;
11. Coordinate public and private programs to meet the needs of those with special health care needs;
12. Initiate substantial long-term care financing reform;
13. Quality improvement; and
14. Reduce waste, fraud and abuse through a coordinated, systematic approach.

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Contact: Thomas Johnson, President and CEO of Medicaid Health Plans of America and Chair of the Partnership for Medicaid (tjohnson@mhpa.org).