

November 17, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States Congress
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
United States Congress
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-220 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy and Majority Leader McConnell and
Minority Leader Schumer:

As the congressional session wraps up, the 58 undersigned advocacy organizations once more respectfully request that you include legislation to protect Medicaid non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) in legislation considered in the “lame duck” session including continuing appropriations, health “extenders,” or pandemic relief legislation.

NEMT has been a mandatory benefit in the Medicaid program since its earliest days but has never been explicitly required in statute. While medical appointments vary by state, beneficiaries use NEMT to access critical services including COVID-19 testing, kidney dialysis, substance use disorder (SUD) treatments, behavioral health appointments, and primary care preventive health visits. The NEMT benefit is used by only 7 percent of the Medicaid population and accounts for less than 1 percent of total Medicaid spending. Yet for those who rely most upon NEMT—beneficiaries with chronic care need including those with ESRD who account for two-thirds of NEMT rides—it can be a lifeline allowing beneficiaries to stay in their homes and out of the hospital.

Despite this dire need for NEMT services at this time as well as the need for the additional services that NEMT networks provide in this crisis, CMS is planning to make the benefit optional at the state level and was scheduled to release an RFI to that effect in December. Further, the administration’s new Healthy Adult Opportunity Section 1115 waiver process encourages states to curtail the benefit.

Bipartisan legislation (HR. 3935) codifying the benefit and ensuring appropriate use has passed the House by unanimous voice vote on the suspension calendar and is pending in the Senate (S. 2846). As our healthcare system strains to meet the needs of the COVID-19 pandemic, now is

the time for Congress to act to ensure the NEMT benefit is available for Medicaid's most vulnerable beneficiaries.

The modest cost of transporting a beneficiary to a dialysis session or to a doctor's appointment to help manage multiple chronic conditions has been proven across multiple studies to be far less than the costs incurred if such appointments are missed and beneficiaries requires more drastic and expensive interventions. In this time of crisis, it is more important than ever that we prevent such episodes and conserve healthcare resources for COVID-19 patients.

We urge you to take this opportunity to permanently protect NEMT in Medicaid, and we thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

AIDS Action Baltimore
AIDS Alabama
AIDS Alabama South
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Allies for Independence
American Academy of HIV Medicine
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Health and Disability
American Federation of County and Municipal Employees
American Kidney Fund
American Network of Community Options and Resources
American Public Transportation Association
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
Amida Care
The Arc of the United States
Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for Autism and Related Disorders
Center for Public Representation
Children's Health Fund
Community Catalyst
Community Transportation Association of America
Dialysis Patient Citizens
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Easterseals
Equality NC
FamiliesUSA
First Focus Campaign for Children
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Greater WI Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. (GWAAR)

Justice in Aging
HIV Dental Alliance
HIV Medicine Association
Hudson Valley Community Services
Lakeshore Foundation
Los Angeles LGBT Center
Lutheran Services in America
Medicare Rights Center
Mental Health America
Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research
National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A)
National Association of Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)
National Council on Aging
National Healthcare for the Homeless Council
Nevada Disability Coalition
Pennsylvania Council on Independent Living
Schizophrenia And Related Disorders Alliance of America
SKIL Resource Center
The Transportation Alliance
Treatment Action Group
Treatment Communities of America
United Spinal Association
WI Association of Mobility Managers (WAMM)
Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN)

CC: The Honorable Charles Grassley
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Frank Pallone
The Honorable Greg Walden
The Honorable Anna Eshoo
The Honorable Michael Burgess
The Honorable Buddy Carter
The Honorable Tony Cardenas
The Honorable Sherrod Brown