



CENTERSTONE

September 21, 2014

Secretary Sylvia Matthews Burwell
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

RE: State of Indiana Proposal to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to extend the Healthy Indiana Plan

Dear Secretary Burwell,

On behalf of the thousands of persons with mental illness and addiction in Indiana that currently lack Medicaid coverage, we want to applaud Indiana Governor Mike Pence's proposal to extend the Health Indiana Plan. We encourage the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to approve Indiana's Medicaid 1115 waiver renewal submission. There are over 350,000 Hoosiers that depend on the proposed expansion for the Health Indiana Plan for access to healthcare. Among these Hoosiers 24% have a substance use disorder and 23% have a serious mental illness needing treatment. We believe that the benefits of approving this waiver renewal far outweigh the limitations for this very vulnerable population.

We understand that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act instructs the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to work with states to expand Medicaid in very close to its original form. However, we believe that the intent of the legislation was to accomplish several core purposes, including: 1) protecting patients within the health insurance marketplace and 2) ensuring that all U.S. citizens, regardless of income, could access the health insurance marketplace. We believe that Governor Pence's proposal, while containing some innovations that are not necessarily strictly "Medicaid expansion," would accomplish both of these original intents. We are heartened that the Healthy Indiana Plan proposal includes provisions for Mental Health and Substance Abuse benefits at parity with medical and surgical benefits, which complies with both the letter and intent of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

As a community mental health provider with 60 years of experience caring for vulnerable persons with brain disorders in our 17 counties, we have seen first-hand the devastating impacts of lack of access to health insurance for the people that we serve. As you know, the longer it takes for a person with addictions or mental illness to get treatment, the worse the brain damage from these devastating illnesses. While we have a strong commitment to serve all within our communities – including those without insurance – sadly, many wait too long to seek care, resulting in devastating consequences. We strongly encourage you to approve the Health Indiana Plan proposal so that this situation can be remedied.

Thank you so very much for considering these comments. We appreciate your leadership in this matter, and we are happy to provide any follow-up information necessary regarding the benefits of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Koesel, LCSW
Chief Executive Officer

The Art and Science of Behavioral Healthcare