June 21, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate

Re: Closing the Medicaid Coverage Gap

Dear Congressional Leaders:

We are writing on behalf of national and community-based organizations representing health centers, medical providers, public health professionals, advocates, and people living with HIV, Hepatitis C virus (HCV), and other chronic illnesses and disabilities.

We write to urge Congress to close the Medicaid “coverage gap” that persists in the 12 states that have not adopted the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). According to national estimates, over two million low-income individuals living in these states are both denied access to Medicaid and ineligible for subsidies to purchase private insurance on the ACA Marketplace.\(^1\) This leaves them without access to the care and treatment that would help them remain healthy and stave off disease progression and disability.

HIV demonstrates the cruelty of the coverage gap and the widening disparities it has wrought across Medicaid and non-Medicaid expansion states. With access to regular antiretroviral treatment and care, HIV is not only a manageable health condition, it is impossible to transmit to others. This is why increasing access to HIV care and treatment is a public health priority and at the center of the federal government’s ambitious plan to end the HIV epidemic by 2030.\(^2\) While Congress has taken steps to encourage Medicaid expansion, it is a solution that depends on state action and political will in states that have shown significant opposition to expansion over the past decade.

---


\(^2\) About Ending the HIV Epidemic, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, available at https://www.cdc.gov/endhiv/about.html.
As outlined in a recent publication of the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School, entitled *Filling the Medicaid Coverage Gap: A Federal Policy Priority for People Living with HIV*, there are several additional policy options available to Congress.³

Closing the Medicaid coverage gap is a necessary, life-saving policy solution for low-income individuals who were intended by Congress to have been covered under the Medicaid expansion. It would ensure health insurance coverage to the 20% of all people living with HIV who live in non-expansion states.⁴

Simply put, individuals in the Medicaid coverage gap cannot afford to wait for states to opt into the ACA’s Medicaid expansion. The quality of life and very survival of those in the Medicaid gap is are at risk now. **Congress should act swiftly to close the gap and help make the promise of the federal Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative a reality.**

Submitted by the undersigned organizations:

Advocates for Youth
African American Health Alliance
AIDS Alabama
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families
AIDS Foundation Chicago
Aliveness Project
American Academy of HIV Medicine
APLA Health
Black AIDS Institute
CAEAR Coalition
Cascade AIDS Project
Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation
Cero VIH Puerto Rico
Friends For Life
Georgia AIDS Coalition
HealthHIV
HIV Dental Alliance
HIV Medicine Association
HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute
Howard Brown Health
International Association of Providers of AIDS Care
John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
Latinos Salud
National Working Positive Coalition
Positive Women’s Network-USA
PrEP4ALL
R2H Action [Right to Health]
Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition
SisterLove, Inc.
Southern Black Policy and Advocacy Network, Inc.
The AIDS Institute
The Well Project
Treatment Action Group
Treatment Access Expansion Project

---
