



COLORADO HEALTH POLICY COALITION

Governor John Hickenlooper
Insurance Commissioner Marguerite Salazar
State Capitol, Room 136
Denver, CO 80203

January 4, 2017

Dear Governor Hickenlooper and Commissioner Salazar,

As new federal leadership has committed to bringing substantial change to our national health policy framework, we, the undersigned, have come together to serve as a partner and resource to our state and Colorado's Congressional delegation as we all work to ensure first, that these changes do not harm our state and its citizens and, second, that we improve on advances we have made where that is possible.

We are encouraged to see leadership from the U.S. House of Representatives reaching out to solicit input on the pending changes because doing so acknowledges implicitly that states play an essential role in health care delivery and therefore deserve an essential role in shaping the policy framework governing that delivery. While we come at this work from very different perspectives, all of us have committed to being constructive advocates as we navigate this new ground. Colorado's history of bipartisanship on health care will be a benefit to our country and makes us an essential voice in the debates and decisions to come.

Reflecting that reality in Colorado, we have joined together as a broad coalition of various interests in an attempt to proactively position Colorado to help shape the federal conversation about the future of health care in America. The goal of our collaboration is to set forth clear principles on both the process Congress should follow to bring about these changes and the policy they ultimately adopt. We're sure you can appreciate that when a group as diverse as the one supporting this letter has found common ground, there is a high likelihood that our areas of agreement will provide great value to the people of Colorado as well as our country.

We have structured our agreement around the two essential areas that face us now: The process Congress will follow to arrive at a new health care framework; and the principles they will adhere to with any new policy they enact.

As we look at the process – our most urgent priority at this stage – we feel strongly that a thoughtful, comprehensive approach that respects the need for bipartisan collaboration is the only path forward. To that end, we have developed the following three guiding principles:

- 1. Repeal the Affordable Care Act and related federal health policies only with a clearly identified and carefully considered replacement plan.** Health care is essential to people’s quality of life, a significant economic driver in Colorado and nationally and a major piece of all state and local government responsibility and budgets. Consumers, businesses and governments all need the stability of understanding the federal framework in which they will operate going forward.
- 2. Given the interconnected nature of health care, across public programs and private markets, addressing component policy pieces in isolation could have significant, negative unintended consequences.** Health care is a complex system that requires comprehensive policy solutions. Making piecemeal changes to select parts of the system can have repercussions throughout the different portions of the health care system and our economy.
- 3. Find a bipartisan path to a new federal health care framework.** The partisanship surrounding the enactment of the Affordable Care Act created a major barrier to engage in meaningful policy debate about health care. As a country, we now have the opportunity to change that dynamic.

As we turned our attention to the underpinnings of any policy that will ultimately be adopted, we found that choice and affordability, consumer protections, cost containment, the protection of our vulnerable populations and rural communities as well as ongoing innovation to be at the heart of the issues Congress must successfully address if we are to have a functioning health care framework that benefits all of us. These include:

- 1. Expand choice, affordability and competition in private markets, while maintaining consumer protections.** Colorado and the country have seen historic gains in ensuring meaningful health coverage. Protecting those gains in coverage, as well as the corresponding benefits of improved access for consumers and sustainability for health care providers, is a priority.
- 2. Promote stability in the market in order to help control costs.** Continuous coverage for everyone is key to an effective and stable insurance market. Encouraging people to get and stay covered will balance risk pools with healthier people and help to control costs. Because instability creates more costs, ensure any transition provides adequate time for carriers to implement changes and minimize impact to consumers.

- 3. Recognize that promoting access to care at the right time in the right setting by ensuring access to coverage has benefits for people, the health care system and our economy.** It costs more to take care of the uninsured in the long term, since delay in seeking health care usually results in costing more than if the person accessed the system early. People without coverage are also unlikely to receive follow up care as well as medications they need to stay healthy. Ensuring access to preventive care and integrated treatment services helps to keep people healthy and leads to early detection and treatment, which can improve the quality of health outcomes and save costs.

- 4. Don't adopt strategies that shift cost from the federal government to state budgets without sufficient and sustained federal funding or create an uneven playing field in the health care market.** Health care markets and state budgets need certainty to function well and efficiently. Adhering to frameworks that require states to take on greater financial risk or larger portions of cost – without corresponding federal investment – will ultimately hurt states like Colorado, which have unique constitutional budget constraints.

- 5. Protect the most vulnerable populations.** Acknowledge the vital role that publically-funded programs play for many including children, seniors and people with disabilities who rely on long term care and services largely not provided by the private market. Ensure a strong health care market through stable funding and federal oversight of comprehensive, affordable coverage. Recognize that publically-funded programs are particularly important in rural communities where the payer mix is less robust and health care consumers and providers are more reliant on federal programs.

- 6. Empower rural communities.** Efficient delivery of health care is driven at the local level. One-size-fits-all approaches will exacerbate inefficiencies and inequities, further disadvantaging geographies that already struggle to find affordable, quality care.

- 7. Encourage health care transformation at the state and community levels with continued federal investment to lower the cost and improve quality of health care.** Colorado has capitalized on opportunities to bring efficiencies and improvements to our health care system through collaboration in both private and public delivery systems particularly by focusing on the integration of behavioral and physical health care. This work can be either fostered or impeded through Congressional efforts. It is critical to promote such innovation, leveraging the resourcefulness of market competition.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with our best thinking on how we might proceed as a state and a country as we navigate the road before us. We hope to be an ongoing source of collaboration and partnership for your office and for Colorado’s entire Congressional delegation.

Respectfully,

Members of the Colorado Health Policy Coalition

Ability Connection Colorado

Boulder Community Health

Action 22

Boulder County Board of County Commissioners

Advocacy Denver

Boulder County Public Health

Advocates for Recovery Colorado

Boulder Valley Women's Health Center

All Kids Covered Colorado

Caring for Colorado Foundation

American Academy of Pediatrics,
Colorado Chapter

Center for Independence

American College of Nurse-Midwives,
Colorado Affiliate

Centura Health

Arc Thrift Stores

Children's Hospital Colorado

Atlantis Community Inc

Club 20

Aurora Chamber of Commerce

Colorado Academy of Family Physicians

Autism Society of Colorado

Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care

Axis Health System

Colorado Association of Health Plans

Bill Lindsay

Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials

Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council	Colorado Foundation for Universal Health Care
Colorado Center on Law and Policy	Colorado Gerontological Society
Colorado Children's Campaign	Colorado Hospital Association
Colorado Children's Healthcare Access Program	Colorado Medical Society
Colorado Chronic Care Collaborative	Colorado Mental Wellness Network
Colorado Coalition for Autism and other Neurological Disability Options	Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights
Colorado Coalition for the Homeless	Colorado Providers Association
Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved	Colorado Psychiatric Society
Colorado Community Health Network	Colorado Public Health Association
Colorado Competitive Council	Colorado School Medicaid Consortium
Colorado Consumer Health Initiative	Colorado State Association of Health Underwriters
Colorado Covering Kids and Families	Craig Hospital
Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition	Denver Health and Hospital Authority
Colorado Cross Disability Coalition	Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
Colorado Fiscal Institute	Disability Law Colorado
	Families at the Forefront of Technology
	Firefly Autism

FRESC	Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains
Glenwood Springs Chamber Resort Association & Film Commission	Polsinelli PC
Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce	Pro 15
Healthier Colorado	Progress Now Colorado
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	Public Health Nurses Association of Colorado
Hospice & Palliative Care Association of the Rockies	Rocky Mountain Health Plans
Kaiser Permanente Colorado	Rose Community Foundation
Lehman Disability Planning, LLC	Stahlman Disability Consulting
Mental Health Colorado	Summit Community Care Clinic
Mind Springs Health	The Arc - Jefferson, Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties
Mountain Family Health Centers	The Arc Arapahoe & Douglas Counties
NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado	The Arc Mesa County
National Hemophilia Foundation, Colorado Chapter	The Arc of Adams County
Niederman Insurance Agency	The Arc of Aurora
Oral Health Colorado	The Arc of Colorado
Parent to Parent of Colorado	The Arc of Larimer County

The Arc of Pikes Peak Region

Young Invincibles

The Arc of Pueblo

The Arc of Southwest Colorado

The Arc of Weld County

The Arc of West Central Colorado

The Association for Community Living in
Boulder & Broomfield Counties

The Bell Policy Center

The Colorado Health Foundation

The Colorado Trust

THRIVE!: The Persons Living With
HIV/AIDS Initiative of Colorado, Inc

Together Colorado

Tri-County Health Department

UCHealth

Vail Valley Partnership

Warner Pacific Insurance Services, Inc

West Springs Hospital

Yondorf & Associates