

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1502

November 5, 2015

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Andy Slavitt
Acting Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 314G
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Acting Administrator Slavitt:

In a previous letter sent May 15, 2015, I expressed concerns about the State of Iowa's proposed transition to Medicaid managed care. I understand that the Iowa Department of Human Services submitted a waiver request on September 3, 2015 to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services to establish this statewide Medicaid managed care delivery system effective January 1, 2016. I still have significant concerns about the plan to transition to the new system in such a short time period.

Ensuring that federal health programs function both effectively and efficiently is a priority of mine. In light of the fact that approximately 560,000 Iowans, or one out of every five Iowans, rely on Medicaid, it is critical that CMS not only review the waiver request thoroughly before any approval but also exercise its authority to deny the proposed waiver or delay its effective date if doing so would protect the wellbeing of Medicaid recipients.

I am concerned about the very short period of time between the waiver request and the planned implementation date of January 1, 2016. This timeline is aggressive compared to other states that have transitioned to Medicaid managed care. Moreover, the state plans to move almost the entire Medicaid population to managed care at once, while other states instead have shifted to managed care more gradually. I am also alarmed at the decision to include the highly successful Hawk-I program in this transition. As a result of Hawk-I, Iowa has long had one of the lowest uninsured rates for children in the nation – something we must not compromise.

Iowa children and families who rely on Medicaid for their health care must not face serious disruptions in care during this transition. These disruptions pose especially serious risks to children and adults with special needs. It is incumbent upon CMS to review the Medicaid waiver request carefully to ensure the state is ready to provide the services these vulnerable populations depend on. Also, providers must know what their obligations are and the processes to ensure that they are able to care for their Medicaid patients. Finally, and most significantly,

Medicaid recipients must understand what their rights and responsibilities are in a managed care plan.

I urge CMS to review the State of Iowa's Medicaid waiver request thoroughly. In its evaluation, CMS should consider whether the Iowa Department of Human Services is prepared for the transition and whether the Medicaid managed care organizations are able to provide high-quality care to Iowa Medicaid recipients on January 1, 2016. If this is not realistic, the agency should not approve a waiver request until it is certain that the transition will not disrupt care for medically needy Iowans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dave Loebsock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Dave Loebsock
Iowa's Second District