



July 14, 2022

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Washington Section 1332 Waiver Application

Dear Secretary Yellen and Secretary Becerra:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit federal comments on Washington's section 1332 waiver application.

The undersigned organizations represent millions of individuals facing serious, acute and chronic health conditions. We have a unique perspective on what individuals and families need to prevent disease, cure illness and manage chronic health conditions. The diversity of our organizations and the populations we serve enable us to draw upon a wealth of knowledge and expertise that is an invaluable resource as we work to find solutions to expand access to high-quality coverage. We urge the Department of the Treasury and the Department of Health and Human Services (Departments) to make the best use of the recommendations, knowledge and experience our organizations offer here.

Our organizations are committed to ensuring that any changes to the healthcare system achieve coverage that is adequate, affordable and accessible for patients and consumers. We therefore strongly support Washington's proposal to improve coverage for consumers via the Cascade Care program, and we urge the Departments to approve this waiver application.

Our organizations are pleased to see that Washington's waiver would moderately expand the number of people with coverage in the state as well as improve the affordability of that coverage. The state

estimates that individual market enrollment would increase by 1.4% and individual market premiums would decrease by more than 1.6% by 2028. These changes will benefit many patients and consumers directly, while fulfilling the statutory guardrails for scope of coverage and affordability.

Our organizations strongly support Washington's efforts to improve health equity by making affordable coverage available to all Washingtonians, regardless of immigration status. Waiving Section 1312(f)(c) of the Affordable Care Act removes a crucial barrier to coverage and allows more Washingtonians to access the care they need. This will enable more families with mixed immigration status to enroll in coverage together, and for uninsured individuals with no other options for health coverage to enroll in coverage as well. The state estimates these groups currently make up 29% of the uninsured population in Washington under 250% of the federal poverty level (FPL), meaning that this policy change has the potential to significantly improve access to coverage. The uninsured rate in Washington is higher for people of color, with Hispanic and Black residents disproportionately represented compared to white, non-Hispanic Washingtonians. By increasing enrollment in coverage among these underserved populations, the state expects to improve health equity and reduce racial disparities in coverage.

Our organizations support the use of pass-through funding to support Cascade Care Savings, the state subsidy program. The implementation of the Cascade Care Savings program is expected to expand financial assistance for Cascade Care plans for individuals with income below 250% of the FPL. This program will improve the affordability of coverage for individuals who already receive federal financial assistance as well as those newly eligible for coverage due to the eligibility changes discussed above who meet this income criteria. Our organizations support Washington's plans to expand financial assistance through the Cascade Care Savings program.

Our organizations support Washington's waiver application to expand access to quality, affordable coverage and urge the Departments to approve this proposal. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

American Lung Association
Arthritis Foundation
Cancer Support Community
Epilepsy Foundation
Hemophilia Federation of America
National Hemophilia Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
The AIDS Institute
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society