



**CWDA**  
Advancing Human Services  
for the Welfare of All Californians



April 17, 2020

**RE: Request for Section 1115 and 1915(b) Medicaid Waiver Extensions**

Dear Members of the California Congressional Delegation,

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), the County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC), the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California (CBHDA), and the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (CAPH), we are writing today to signal a strong need for Congressional support in our request for an extension of the Section 1115 and 1915(b) Medicaid waivers and, set to expire this year.

Our members are diverting nearly all resources to meet the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. As this crisis grows in scale, our associations recognize the extreme impact on our members' ability to continue to engage and respond to ongoing federal, state and local discussions about system redesign after the current waivers end in an insightful and meaningful way. While our current focus must remain on the health and safety of our communities during this global pandemic, we urge you to require that CMS extend expiring Section 1115 and 1915(b) Medicaid waivers for states that request it.

California's Section 1115 waiver and the Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health Services waiver (1915(b)) have provided the opportunity to use federal Medicaid funds in innovative ways geared toward the needs of millions of Californians. In recent years, the Medicaid waivers have been the foundation for innovation in California's health care delivery system. The investments have been used for efforts to address social determinates of health and care coordination for our most vulnerable individuals. California has distinctive county initiatives such as the Whole Person Care Pilots, which coordinate primary care, behavioral health and social services delivering a wide range of wraparound services for California's Medi-Cal recipients; Public Hospital Redesign and Incentives in Medi-Cal (PRIME); and the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS). Medicaid demonstration waivers have permitted states and local governments to build infrastructure and extend coverage and benefits to individuals most in need, including those living without a home.

In 2018 Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services issued new guidance that required California to rethink how we have typically utilized Medicaid waivers. Our organizations have been working closely with the State in preparation to transition a number of key components that expire in 2020 and create new approaches to care. Now it is clear that the coronavirus emergency will disrupt much of this process, while at the same time, the future of our upcoming 2020-21 state budget, where many of these policies would have made their way through a stakeholder process. This transition requires consistent engagement and consultation between our intergovernmental partners, engagement that is now focused on responding to the current public health emergency.

April 17, 2020

Our members face massive challenges as a result of this global COVID-19 pandemic, and we applaud the thoughtful response Congressional leaders have provided thus far. The quick action by Congress will undoubtedly assist with the frontline response our members are providing. In addition to the financial investments, we urge action that allows states and local governments to focus on addressing immediate COVID-19 concerns, ensuring any additional policy recommendations receive the proper considerations they require. We respectfully ask Congress to step in during these dire circumstances to give States an opportunity to extend expiring Section 1115 and 1915(b) Medicaid waivers for at least one-year.

Respectfully,



Graham Knaus  
Executive Director, CSAC  
[gknaus@counties.org](mailto:gknaus@counties.org)  
(916) 650-8109



Michelle Gibbons  
Executive Director, CHEAC  
[mjibbons@cheac.org](mailto:mjibbons@cheac.org)  
(916) 327-7540



Cathy Senderling-McDonald  
Deputy Executive Director, CWDA  
[csend@cwda.org](mailto:csend@cwda.org)  
(916) 443-1749



Jackie Bender  
Vice President of Policy, CAPH  
[jbender@caph.org](mailto:jbender@caph.org)  
(510) 874-3408



Michelle Doty Cabrera  
Executive Director, CBHDA  
[mcabrera@cbhda.org](mailto:mcabrera@cbhda.org)  
(916) 556-3477