



July 9, 2010

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The Honorable Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senate

Dear Senator Durbin,

On behalf of the 3,800 physicians and medical students we represent, we urge you to strongly support legislation extending the enhanced federal match rate for Medicaid (FMAP) as originally authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Illinois is one of 30 states facing a crushing budget shortfall, and cannot meet the needs of our patients with the loss of these federal funds.

The enhanced FMAP is a necessary response to growing Medicaid caseloads and decreasing state revenues, both directly tied to the national recession. Without immediate congressional action, the FMAP will revert back to its pre-ARRA level on Dec. 31, 2010. Illinois' extensive Medicaid program will struggle to meet the needs of a growing population, and to meet federal requirements to pay the providers to care for them. Primary care physicians comprise the 5,400 primary care practices that provide medical homes to nearly 2 million Medicaid and All Kids patients, ensuring they have access to coordinated and comprehensive care.

States are still struggling with the repercussions of a slow economy. Congress has debated, but not passed legislation, extending the enhanced FMAP for an additional six months to June 30, 2011. The extension would bring an estimated \$750 million in federal funds to Illinois. Unfortunately, the House dropped the FMAP extension from H.R. 4213, the American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act.

Illinois faces a \$13 billion budget shortfall, so losing these funds will be particularly devastating. The high rate of unemployed and under-employed in our state means that the number of Illinoisans relying on Medicaid will continue to grow. The need for providers will grow as well. The cost of providing care and keeping practices running will continue to go up. Our state absolutely cannot withstand a cut in funding and maintain front-line and comprehensive services to those patients.

On behalf of the physicians of Illinois and the Medicaid patients we care for, we urge the each member of the Illinois congressional delegation to strongly support efforts to put the six-month extension into a legislative vehicle to stabilize resources for our Medicaid program. Urge your colleagues in other states to do the same. Ensure that we can provide care for those who need it most but cannot afford it on their own.

Sincerely,

Patrick A. Tranmer, MD, MPH  
President

CC: Julie Hamos, Director, Illinois Dept. Of Healthcare and Family Services