

April 4th, 2012

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Essential Health Benefits Bulletin and Frequently Asked Questions
Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

The undersigned organizations strongly support the Department of Health and Human Services' efforts to implement the Patient Protection Affordable Care Act (hereinafter the Affordable Care Act) and make quality, affordable health insurance available to millions. We write in response to the Essential Health Benefits Bulletin released on December 16th 2011 and the Frequently Asked Questions document released on February 17th 2012. We appreciate the initial steps taken by the Department in developing what constitutes the essential health benefits (EHB) package.

While the Bulletin and accompanying FAQ document provide a preliminary framework on aspects of the essential health benefits that will enable states to start planning for the changes necessary to comply with the Affordable Care Act, the documents do not provide sufficient detail for consumers to analyze and weigh the myriad of important but complex issues around benchmark plans and EHB more broadly. Both documents raise significant process and administrative questions that need to be clarified regarding benchmark plans. Furthermore, there are significant issues that neither document addresses such as definitions of medical necessity and parameters of determining actuarial value.

In light of the overwhelming importance of the essential health benefit package, we ask the Department to provide a Notice of Proposed Rule Making for essential health benefits as soon as possible. It is imperative that a proposal be released soon so that the issues can be fully explored by the many stakeholders with an interest in the essential health benefits, while leaving time for the Department to consider public comments and issue a final rule for successful implementation in 2014.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with the Department on developing this critical component of the Affordable Care Act.

Sincerely,

AIDS Foundation of Chicago
The AIDS Institute
AIDS United
American Association on Health and Disability

American Diabetes Association
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
The Carter Center Mental Health Program
Community Catalyst
Disciples Justice Action Network
Eating Disorders Coalition
Families USA
HealthHIV
March of Dimes
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Health Law Program
National Partnership for Women and Families
National Women's Law Center
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Raising Women's Voices for the Health We Need
State Associations of Addiction Services
Treatment Access Expansion Project
Treatment Action Group (TAG)
United Cerebral Palsy
United Spinal Association