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August 14, 2019

Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Re: Rhode Island's 1332 Waiver Application

Dear Secretary Azar and Secretary Mnuchin:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on Rhode Island's 1332 Waiver Application.

The undersigned organizations represent millions of individuals facing serious, acute and chronic health conditions across the country. Our organizations have a unique perspective on what patients need to prevent disease, cure illness and manage chronic health conditions. The diversity of our groups and the patients and consumers we represent enables us to draw upon a wealth of knowledge and expertise and serve as an invaluable resource regarding any decisions affecting state health insurance marketplaces and the patients that they serve. We urge the 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. A strong, robust marketplace is essential for people with serious, acute and chronic health conditions to access comprehensive coverage that includes all of the treatments and services that they need to stay healthy at an affordable cost. Our organizations support Rhode Island's efforts to strengthen its marketplace by submitting this application to implement a reinsurance program, and we urge the Departments to approve the application.

Reinsurance is an important tool to help stabilize health insurance markets. Reinsurance programs help insurance companies cover the claims of very high cost enrollees, which in turn keeps premiums affordable for other individuals buying insurance on the individual market. Reinsurance programs have

been used to stabilize premiums in a number of healthcare programs, such as Medicare Part D. A temporary reinsurance fund for the individual market was also established under the Affordable Care Act and reduced premiums by an estimated 10 to 14 percent in its first year.¹ A recent analysis by Avalere of the seven states that have already created their own reinsurance programs through Section 1332 waivers found that these states reduced individual market premiums by an average of 19.9 percent in their first year.²

Rhode Island's proposal will create a reinsurance program starting for the 2020 plan year and continuing for five years. Based on the initial analysis commissioned by the state, this program is projected to reduce premiums by 5.9 percent in 2020 and 6.3 percent in 2021 and increase the number of individuals obtaining health insurance through the individual market by nearly one percent. This would help patients with pre-existing conditions obtain affordable, comprehensive coverage.

As states consider different ways to stabilize their marketplaces, our organizations are pleased that Rhode Island has submitted an application that is projected to improve coverage and affordability without compromising access to essential health benefits or jeopardizing other important protections that our patients rely on. We believe that this 1332 Waiver Application will help stabilize the individual market in Rhode Island and protect patients and consumers. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Arthritis Foundation
Epilepsy Foundation
Hemophilia Federation of America
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Psoriasis Foundation

¹ American Academy of Actuaries, Individual and Small Group Markets Committee. *An Evaluation of the Individual Health Insurance Market and Implications of Potential Changes*. January 2017. Retrieved from https://www.actuary.org/files/publications/Acad_eval_indiv_mkt_011817.pdf.

² Avalere. *State-Run Reinsurance Programs Reduce ACA Premiums by 19.9% on Average*. March 2019. Retrieved from <https://avalere.com/press-releases/state-run-reinsurance-programs-reduce-aca-premiums-by-19-9-on-average>.