



May 13, 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: Alaska 1332 State Innovation Waiver Extension

Dear Secretary Yellen and Secretary Becerra:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on Alaska’s Section 1332 State Innovation Waiver five-year extension 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 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. 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 Alaska's efforts to continue to strengthen its marketplace by extending the Alaska 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% in its first year.¹ More recently, a data brief released by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services showed that states with reinsurance waivers have experienced significantly lower individual market premiums than they would have otherwise and have seen gains in insurer participation.² The Alaska Reinsurance Program is estimated to have lowered individual market premiums by 38.5% since its implementation in 2018, and the state expects these savings to continue if the waiver is renewed.

Alaska's proposal to extend the Alaska Reinsurance Program will continue to lower premiums for patients, including those with pre-existing conditions, who might otherwise struggle to afford healthcare. This proposal increases health affordability and equity for Alaskans and will help to strengthen the state's overall health insurance market. Our organizations support Alaska's 1332 State Innovation Waiver and urge the Departments to approve it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Arthritis Foundation
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Epilepsy Foundation
Hemophilia Federation of America
Lupus Foundation of America
Mended Little Hearts
National Hemophilia Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Susan G. Komen
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

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 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO). State Innovation waivers: State-Based Reinsurance Programs. August 2021. Available at: <https://www.cms.gov/CCIIO/Programs-and-Initiatives/State-Innovation-Waivers/Downloads/1332-Data-Brief-Aug2021.pdf>.