

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
MISSISSIPPI STATE CONFERENCE**

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Re: NAACP Public Comments in Response to MS Medicaid Work Requirements

The Mississippi State Conference NAACP (MS NAACP) submits this comment in opposition of the proposal that would impose a work requirement as a condition of eligibility for Medicaid. The MS NAACP, formed in 1945 and the state's foremost civil rights organization, has been on the frontlines of all major civil rights battles in Mississippi and across the South. With a revolving membership of more than 11,000 members and a presence in nearly every Mississippi county, the MS NAACP advocates for economic, educational, political and social justice for all people to ensure a society that is free from racial discrimination and division. Included in the mission of the MS NAACP, is the right of African Americans and other people of color to have access to timely, quality, affordable health care. With rising health care costs, now is not the time to implement a policy barrier that will limit access to health insurance through the Medicaid program in Mississippi.

Mississippi has some of the worst health outcomes in the country and African Americans in the state disproportionately bear the burden of these negative outcomes. Mortality rates for African Americans in Mississippi are higher than whites living the state due to: hypertension (43.1% vs. 37.1%), stroke (59.5 deaths per 100,000 vs. 44.2 deaths per 100,000), diabetes (14.5% vs. 11.2%), renal disease (37.8 deaths per 100,000 vs 17.1 deaths per 100,000), HIV/AIDS (411.0 new cases per 100,000 vs. 104.0 new cases per 100,000), and cancer (233.0 new cases per 100,000 vs. 187.2 new cases per 100,000). Obesity rates are also significantly higher among African Americans compared to whites (43.2% vs. 30.2%). Infant mortality, an indicator of a society's health, is also higher among African Americans compared to their white counterparts (12.4 deaths per 1,000 live births vs. 5.4 deaths per 1,000 live births) living in Mississippi.

Medicaid provides health coverage to millions of Americans, including eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults and people with disabilities. Medicaid also assists low-income elderly and disabled Medicare beneficiaries with their Medicare premiums and cost-sharing and covers important benefits that Medicare does not cover, especially long-term care. Research has shown that those with Medicaid coverage fare much better than their uninsured counterparts on diverse measures of access to care, utilization, and unmet needs. In Mississippi, 20% of the residents are uninsured compared to 11.7% in the United States with African Americans composing 30.6% of uninsured individuals.

The MS NAACP's opposition to this proposal is supported by a June 2018 brief, entitled "Implications of Work Requirements in Medicaid: What Does the Data Say?", issued by the Kaiser Family Foundation which highlights some policy implications of work requirements. Key findings from the study's authors, Garfield, Rudowitz, Musumeci and Damico, include:

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- **Most Medicaid enrollees who can work are already working but could face barriers in complying with reporting requirements.** Nationally, one in three Medicaid adults never use a computer or the internet and four in ten do not use email. Many enrollees would face barriers in complying with work reporting requirements to maintain coverage. This would be particularly burdensome to African Americans living in Mississippi. A 2012 report, *Broadband in Mississippi: Toward Policies for Access Equity*, described the inadequacy of broadband access in Mississippi. Of the top ten counties in the state of Mississippi with access to more than four broadband providers, only one county has a population of color that is greater than 50%, resulting in both lower access to broader options.
- **Paid work can help provide family resources, but low-wage and part-time work may be sufficient to overcome poverty.** Adults with Medicaid face high rates of financial insecurity. In non-Medicaid expansion states, working in low-wage and part-time work would lead to loss of Medicaid with access to coverage through the ACA marketplace.
- **Many Medicaid enrollees who are not working could be exempt from work requirements but would still need to navigate an exemption process.** This process would be burdensome and those who are unable to navigate the system would lose coverage.

Therefore, MS NAACP opposes the work requirement for Medicaid because it would add an additional barrier to accessing health insurance and healthcare for those most in need.

Furthermore, The MS NAACP believes that having access to health insurance and healthcare is an important civil right. As a result, we stand in opposition of this proposal that would impose a work requirement as a condition of eligibility for Medicaid. It would be more prudent to focus efforts in creating more access to healthcare, rather than causing a hardship upon the residents of Mississippi.

Sincerely,



Dr. Corey Wiggins
Executive Director
Mississippi State Conference NAACP