

Nariman Heshmati, MD, MBA, FACOG  
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January 23, 2024

*Delivered via email*

Honorable Members of the House of Representatives,

Washington state has a long history of supporting health care reform and increasing access to quality care. Ten years ago, the WSMA and many other health, social, and equity organizations came together to push for the expansion of Medicaid in our state.

It was the right thing to do, and we were successful in bringing insurance coverage to a million more Washingtonians. About 25% of the state's population is enrolled in Medicaid/Apple Health today.

While we have made significant improvements to expanding coverage, the high number of Medicaid enrollees has intensified another problem: meaningful access to medical services. Despite the state's high dependence on Medicaid for coverage, the Legislature has not kept pace with rising costs for the physicians and advanced care practitioners providing services for those patients.

Washington has not increased reimbursement across the board for health care services in decades and is one of the worst states in the nation when it comes to reimbursing specialty health care services. The result is too many people without timely and reliable access to critical health services, including specialty care such as cancer diagnoses, joint replacements, and other complex health care needs. In a recent survey of Medicaid enrollees, nearly four in 10 had been denied an appointment; four in 10 had trouble getting an appointment for a specialty referral for follow-up treatment; and one in four had trouble getting an appointment for medical treatment.

It doesn't have to be this way. Our state receives the lowest federal contribution for Medicaid rates in the country. We can do better, and we can do it without impacting the general fund. By enacting a funding mechanism known as a covered lives assessment, the state can access federal funds with a nearly 2:1 match. This will:

- Increase Medicaid rates to Medicare equivalents;
- Ensure that reimbursement better reflects the cost of delivering care;

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- Encourage more physicians and advanced practitioners to participate in Medicaid networks; and
- Improve access to care for Washingtonians, especially underserved and rural communities and people of color who depend on Medicaid.

Similar to assessments already in place for hospitals, nursing homes, and ambulances, the covered lives assessment is designed to leverage federal funding to support investments in Washington's Medicaid program. By assessing insurers a small amount per person (primarily Medicaid managed care organizations), Washington can draw down about \$242 million in federal funds to provide the state with approximately \$403 million. This allows physicians and advanced practitioners to see more Medicaid patients and will make a significant difference to the health of the 2 million Washington residents who need it the most.

Sincerely,



Nariman Heshmati, MD, MBA, FACOG  
President

**The undersigned public health organizations, state specialty societies, county medical societies, clinics, and medical groups have signed on in support.**

**Public Health**

Erika Lautenbach  
President  
Washington State Association Local Public Health  
Officers



Gib Morrow, MD  
Health Officer  
Kitsap Public Health District



**State Medical Associations**

Scott Fannin, DO  
President  
Washington Osteopathic Medical Association



Jason Dotson  
President  
Washington State Healthcare Leaders Association



Anna Taylor, MHA, FACHE  
President  
Rural Health Clinic Association of Washington



**State Specialty Societies**

Sung-Won Kim, MD  
President  
Northwest Academy of Otolaryngology



Wei Xiong, MD, PhD, FRCPC  
President  
Pacific Northwest Society of Pathologists



Ann Diamond, MD  
President  
Washington Academy of Family Physicians



Emily Studebaker, Esq.  
Executive Director  
Washington Ambulatory Surgery Center Association



Beth Ebel, MD, FAAP, MsC, MPH  
President  
Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics



Richard Cheng, MD, FACC  
President  
Washington Chapter of the American College of Cardiology



Herbie Duber, MD, MPH, FACEP  
President  
Washington Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians



Alson Burke, MD  
ACOG WA Section Chair  
Washington Chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

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Chris Knight, MD, FACP  
Governor  
Washington Chapter of the American College of  
Physicians



Mark Vossler, MD  
Past President  
Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility



Otway Louie, MD  
President  
Washington Society of Plastic Surgeons



Ravi S. Ramasamy, MD  
President  
Washington State Council of Child and  
Adolescent Psychiatry



Katie Bassett, MD, FAAD  
President  
Washington State Dermatology Association



Jay Lopez, MD  
President  
Washington State Medical Oncology Society



Pravin Khemani, MD  
President  
Washington State Neurological Society



Kevin MacDonald, MD  
President  
Washington State Orthopaedic Association



Justin Stamschror, MD  
President  
Washington State Psychiatric Association



Jennifer Favinger, MD  
President  
Washington State Radiological Society



Eric Q. Konnick, MD, MS  
President  
Washington State Society of Pathologists



Una Lee, MD  
President  
Washington State Urology Society



**County Medical Societies**

Saravanan Kasthuri MD  
Medical Director  
Northwest Endovascular Surgery  
President  
Benton Franklin County Medical Society



Bruce Andison, MD  
President  
Clark County Medical Society



Anne Marie Wong, MD  
Secretary Treasurer  
Grays Harbor County Medical Society

Michelle Terry, MD  
President  
King County Medical Society



Chris Johnson, MD  
President  
Kitsap County Medical Society



Garrett Jeffery, DO, FAAFP  
President  
Northwest Washington Medical Society




Julian Arroyo, MD  
President  
Pierce County Medical Society



Gerald Yorioka, MD  
President  
Snohomish County Medical Society



Erin R. Medina, MD  
President  
Spokane County Medical Society

The logo for Spokane County Medical Society features a stylized blue and orange circular emblem to the left of the text "SPOKANE COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY" in blue, with "SPOKANE COUNTY" on the top line and "MEDICAL SOCIETY" on the bottom line.

**Clinics and Medical Groups**

Francis Riedo MD  
Medical Director Infection Control and Prevention

Diego Fernando Zea Pinos, MD  
Diego Lopez De Castilla, MD, MPH  
Infectious Disease Care

EvergreenHealth



Cara Beatty, MD  
Chief Executive Officer  
Providence Clinical Network, Eastern Washington-  
Montana Region



Jeremy Paige, MD  
Rayus Radiology – Poulosbo



Douglas Seiler, MD  
President  
TRA Medical Imaging



John D. Pryor, MD  
President/Chair  
Proliance Surgeons



Michael B. Marshall, MD  
Chief Executive Officer  
Providence Clinical Network, Puget Sound  
Region



Jay Burghart  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Doctors Clinic



THE DOCTORS CLINIC  
A PART OF FRANCISCAN MEDICAL GROUP

Mark Mantei  
Chief Executive Officer  
Vancouver Clinic



Jeff Peterson, MD  
President  
Washington Rheumatology Alliance



Bart Keogh, MD  
President  
Radia Inc.  
Radia Imaging Center Holdings LLC



Lloyd Stambaugh, MD  
President  
Evergreen Radia LLC  
Swedish Radia LLC

**EVERGREEN RADIA  
IMAGING CENTER**



Glen Carlson, MD  
Westsound Emergency Physicians



Charles Shen, MD  
President  
South Sound Radiology, Inc. P.S.



Philip Lund, MD  
President  
Washington Managed Imaging



WMI member groups:

- Bellingham Advanced Medical Imaging
- Integra Imaging P.S.
- Northwest Radiologists
- Skagit Digital Imaging
- Vantage Radiology & Diagnostic Services
- Inland Imaging Associates, LLC
- Mount Baker Imaging
- Olympic Medical Imaging Consultants
- Skagit Radiology