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;
Honorable Members
House Appropriations and Senate Ways & Means Committees
January 23, 2024

Page 2

- 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
Honorable Members
House Appropriations and Senate Ways & Means Committees
January 23, 2024
Page 3

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
Honorable Members  
House Appropriations and Senate Ways & Means Committees  
January 23, 2024  
Page 4  

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
Honorable Members
House Appropriations and Senate Ways & Means Committees
January 23, 2024
Page 5

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
Honorable Members
House Appropriations and Senate Ways & Means Committees
January 23, 2024
Page 6

Erin R. Medina, MD
President
Spokane County Medical Society

Clinics and Medical Groups

Francis Riedo MD
Medical Director Infection Control and Prevention

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

EvergreenHealth

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

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

Jeremy Paige, MD
Rayus Radiology – Poulsbo

Jay Burghart
Chief Executive Officer
The Doctors Clinic

Douglas Seiler, MD
President
TRA Medical Imaging

Mark Mantei
Chief Executive Officer
Vancouver Clinic
Honorable Members
House Appropriations and Senate Ways & Means Committees
January 23, 2024

Jeff Peterson, MD
President
Washington Rheumatology Alliance

Glen Carlson, MD
Westsound Emergency Physicians

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

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

Lloyd Stambaugh, MD
President
Evergreen Radia LLC
Swedish Radia LLC

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