The Stronger Medicaid Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Act

U.S. Senators Michael Bennet (D-Colo.), Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii), Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.)

Over 71 million individuals are enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP, providing essential coverage of health care services, like primary and preventive care, mental and behavioral health, and chronic illness treatment, for over 20 percent of the United States population. Due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, tens of millions of people are unemployed, and they face significant uncertainty on the economy moving forward. For many, losing a job also means losing employer-sponsored health insurance coverage. Researchers also estimate that more than 10 million people will lose employer-sponsored health insurance as a result of pandemic-related job loss in their household between April and December 2020. Just in the first three months of the pandemic, 5.4 million laid-off workers became uninsured.

Without a national strategy to contain and mitigate COVID-19, infected individuals should be taken care of regardless of their employment status. Medicaid provides a critical safety net for individuals who have lost or cannot afford coverage and cannot afford care. As individuals lose both their health coverage and income, there has been a 5.8% national increase in Medicaid enrollment in the past three months. It is critical that state Medicaid agencies have the option to provide coverage for any care related to COVID-19 for anyone who needs it, especially those who are uninsured.

The Stronger Medicaid Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Act would allow Medicaid to provide increased coverage for COVID-19-related treatment to any uninsured individual. This legislation builds on *The Families First Coronavirus Response Act*, which provided Medicaid coverage for COVID-19 testing, and would allow Medicaid programs to pay for treatment, hospitalization, drugs, and vaccines to all uninsured and individuals with COVID-19. This bill would also clarify that undocumented individuals can receive similar treatment and vaccines through emergency Medicaid.

Supporting Organizations: The Arc of the United States, Epilepsy Foundation, National Hispanic Medical Association, Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Families USA, Colorado Safety Net Collaborative, The Arc of Colorado, National Immigration Law Center, National Health Law Program, and People's Health Clinic