



The Honorable Michael Bennet
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Cory Gardner
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Diana DeGette
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jared Polis
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Scott Tipton
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Ken Buck
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Doug Lamborn
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mike Coffman
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Ed Perlmutter
U.S. House of Representatives

September 25, 2018

Dear members of the Colorado Congressional delegation:

I hope you will address an urgent issue to support the health of former foster care youth. H.R. 6, the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act—passed by the U.S. House of Representatives (House) in June—includes H.R. 4998, the Health Insurance for Former Foster Youth Act. H.R. 4998 aims to ensure that former foster youth who are in care by their 18th birthday and previously enrolled in Medicaid receive healthcare until age 26, regardless of the state they reside in. I was disappointed that the Senate-passed version of this opioid legislative package did not include H.R. 4998. I write to you today on behalf of All Kids Covered—a broad and diverse coalition of family doctors, pediatricians, community clinics, large and small hospitals, and many other child health advocates dedicated to securing comprehensive health coverage for all Colorado children and youth—to respectfully urge you to champion this provision’s inclusion as consensus is reached on a final congressional opioid package.

Young people who are exiting the foster care system have well documented health needs. According to the Congressional Research Service, 35-60% of children entering foster care have at least one chronic or acute condition, such as asthma, dental decay, or malnutrition. Furthermore, 50-75% have behavioral health issues that may benefit from mental health services.¹ These unique challenges make it difficult for individuals aging out of foster care to become functional, self-supporting adults—underscoring the need for this population to maintain essential health insurance coverage during this vulnerable time.

Current law allows children below age 26 to stay on their parents’ health insurance plan and requires that states provide Medicaid coverage to foster care youth who age out of the foster care system in their state until they



turn 26. However, it remains a state option to provide coverage to children who age out of foster care in a different state. Involvement in the foster care system should not preclude youth from guaranteed access to timely, affordable, and comprehensive health coverage if they chose to move from the state where they were enrolled in foster care.

Equal access to healthcare means enabling access to health insurance coverage for all young adults, including former foster youth, until the age of 26. If passed, H.R. 4998 would importantly reduce a significant barrier to health for individuals from the most sensitive backgrounds, making a genuine impact on many Colorado youth.

We know that continuity of coverage matters across the lifespan. Individuals aging out of the foster care system are no exception and should not go without essential medical coverage for any reason, much less because of an eligibility restriction tied to residency. Extending Medicaid coverage for all former foster youth can help guarantee that they are better prepared as they transition out of foster care into adulthood. Securing H.R. 4998 in final opioid legislation would constitute a significant step towards equalizing insurance coverage among youth aging out of foster care. Its inclusion in H.R. 6 is common sense because more youth are living in foster care as a result of opioid use. Young Coloradans who have aged out of the foster care system deserve your attention and support as they transition into adulthood.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

Adela Flores-Brennan, Colorado Consumer Health Initiative

Erin Miller, Colorado Children's Campaign

Stephanie Brooks, Covering Kids and Families

ⁱ U.S. Congressional Research Service. Child Welfare: Health Care Needs of Children in Foster Care and Related Federal Issues. (R42378; November 19, 2014), by Stoltzfus, Emilie , Baumrucker P. Baumrucker, Adrienne L. Fernandes-Alcantara, and Bernadette Fernandez.