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Over 190 Leaders Show Bipartisan Support of Medicaid on Program's 50th Anniversary

Federal, State Leaders Join The Partnership for Medicaid in Celebrating a Lifeline of Support

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Partnership for Medicaid, a nonpartisan coalition of 23 national groups representing physicians, hospitals, clinics, health plans, counties and labor, today sent the President and Congress a letter, signed by a bipartisan group of 191 national and state leaders from across the country, praising Medicaid's impact on the nation's health as the program marks its 50th anniversary.

"For half a century, Medicaid has been a lifeline of support to countless millions of individuals and families across the United States," the letter says. "It has been there when people face life's most difficult circumstances ... and it has provided a solid foundation for well-being by covering preventive screenings and primary care services."

Among those signing the letter: two former secretaries of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), three former members of Congress, two former directors of the federal agency that oversees Medicaid, 38 current and former state Medicaid directors, and 23 national organizations and 124 state and local organizations dedicated to improving the health of all people.

"This letter illustrates the breadth and depth of support and appreciation America's leaders have for Medicaid," said Bruce Siegel, MD, MPH, president and CEO of America's Essential Hospitals, the Partnership's first co-chair. "It highlights the contributions Medicaid has made and the significant changes the program has undergone during its 50-year history."

Since President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Medicaid into law in 1965, it has evolved from a program designed to serve the health care needs of low-income women and their children to one that cares for nearly one in five people, including seniors in need of long-term services and supports, children, people living with disabilities, and teenagers and young adults in foster care. Medicare has touched nearly two-thirds of people across the nation, either directly or through care for a family member or friend.

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Because of its reach, Medicaid also has improved the quality and efficiency of the nation's health care system. States have used the flexibility of Medicaid waivers to expand access to home- and community-based services that make independent living possible for the elderly and people with disabilities.

"Medicaid is a unique national program because states have the flexibility to test innovative new ways to deliver care to those in need," said Kip Piper, former Wisconsin Medicaid director and senior adviser to former HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson. "State Medicaid programs have truly been laboratories of change for the better in American health care."

The Medicaid program is a good investment in America's future, as there are health and economic benefits of giving people a way to pay for their care. Children with Medicaid coverage live healthier and more productive lives as adults than similarly disadvantaged children without access to the program. Medicaid is a job creator, especially in rural communities, where it supports vital health care jobs at hospitals, health centers and specialized providers dedicated to caring for vulnerable people.

"Medicaid isn't what many people think. It fills the gaps in health coverage that often occur in people's lives, helping them through life events that would otherwise leave them uninsured," said Margaret A. Murray, CEO of the Association for Community Affiliated Plans, a Partnership member. "In fact, the majority of adults with Medicaid have full- or part-time jobs, but those jobs either don't offer employer-sponsored coverage or pay too little to support the purchase of private coverage."

In the letter, the signers call on policymakers to "preserve and strengthen this program for the next 50 years." Read the letter and see the full list of signers at medicaidat50.org.

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About The Partnership for Medicaid

The Partnership for Medicaid is a nonpartisan, nationwide coalition made up of organizations representing physicians and other providers, hospitals, clinics, health plans, counties and labor. The goal of the coalition is to preserve and improve the Medicaid program. By working in a bipartisan manner with all levels of government and affected constituency groups, The Partnership for Medicaid seeks to provide viable solutions to improving the quality and delivery of services, with the aim of constraining costs without undermining the program's fundamental goals. Above all, the Partnership for Medicaid acts as a unified voice to ensure that Medicaid continues its crucial role as a lifeline for people who need it. For more information, please visit thepartnershipformedicaid.org.