

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 12, 2023

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21244

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure:

We write to thank you for your commitment to recognizing the critical role social determinants of health play in public health disparities, particularly for those requiring long-term services and supports (LTSS). As the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) considers state waiver demonstrations relating to social determinants of health, we respectfully request that you provide information regarding the agency's current ability to address housing-related needs.

The vast majority of aging adults and individuals with disabilities prefer to receive care and support within their own homes and communities. Home and community-based services (HCBS) are essential in allowing these individuals to age in place or manage a disability, providing care that ranges from home modifications and caregiver support to transportation and employment assistance. However, while state Medicaid programs are required to cover LTSS in institutional settings such as nursing homes, most HCBS are optional. This leads to differences in accessing care in a community setting among the more than 14 million adults who require LTSS, despite only 10 percent receiving care in institutional settings.¹ Medicaid beneficiaries relying on HCBS not only face uncertainties in available services, but also must be able to afford to live in their own communities to receive this life-changing care to begin with.

Unfortunately, doing so is becoming increasingly harder for people who are struggling with rising housing costs, finding themselves on years-long Section 8 waiting lists or experiencing homelessness. Individuals contending with housing instability, often the most vulnerable members of our society, face immense barriers to accessing healthcare and managing complex medical needs. The cost of housing is rapidly outpacing wage growth across the country, with the average household considered rent burdened as a record number of families spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing.² For too many, this forces a choice between paying rent and seeking medical attention, with low-income individuals being more likely to forgo routine primary and preventative care as a result.³ Living arrangements are

¹ *Fact Sheet: Long-Term Services and Supports*, AARP PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE (August 2019), aarp.org/pri/topics/ltss/home-community-services/long-term-services-and-supports.html.

² *Key Takeaways from the 4th Quarter Housing Affordability Update*, MOODY'S ANALYTICS (January 2023), cre.moodyanalytics.com/insights/market-insights/q4-2022-housing-affordability-update.

³ *Adults with Housing Insecurity Have Worse Access to Primary and Preventive Care*, Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine (2019), doi.org/10.3122/jabfm.2019.04.180374.

inextricably linked to health outcomes, and it is past time that we treat the housing crisis as the public health issue that it is.

As policymakers, we recognize that there are many avenues to deliver lifesaving care to our constituents, and we are deeply grateful for the unprecedented steps taken by the Biden-Harris Administration in expanding housing supports through Medicaid. Medicaid is the leading source of health coverage for those facing housing risks, as well as the primary payer for HCBS. In 2021, CMS released guidance for states seeking to design programs, benefits, and services that better address social determinants of health.⁴ In 2023, CMS issued further guidance on the ability of states to address housing instability in lieu of service.⁵ More recently, the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced the creation of the Housing and Services Partnership Accelerator, which will support state Medicaid programs working to expand housing-related supports for people with disabilities and older adults who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.⁶ These actions are crucial in ensuring that those requiring LTSS and their caregivers, often unpaid family members and loved ones, are able to remain in their communities.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, state Medicaid agencies are already using Section 1115 demonstration waivers, as well as additional statutes under Sections 1915(a), 1915(b), 1915(c), 1915(i), 1915(k), and 1945 of the *Social Security Act*, to cover housing-related services for Medicaid beneficiaries. From Oregon, where state officials have proposed a short-term Medicaid rent assistance benefit, to Massachusetts, where leaders have sought to amend an existing waiver to fund housing for covered migrant families seeking shelter, states are offering bold plans to recognize housing as a critical determinant of health. Although it delivers essential services to beneficiaries, each successful waiver demonstration points to a need that Medicaid does not cover under the status quo. Permanent fixes are needed, and LTSS require that Medicaid provides parity in housing coverage between HCBS and nursing home patients.

In recognizing that CMS is leveraging a vast network of guidelines to best determine services, we respectfully request the following information so that Congress may facilitate the agency's ability to address housing needs:

- From FY2012 to FY2023, what states, disaggregated by year, have requested waivers for housing-related services?
- From FY2012 to FY2023, how many Section 1115 demonstration waiver requests reference long-term services and supports?
- Please provide any research conducted by the agency on the impact of housing instability on health outcomes.

⁴ *Opportunities in Medicaid and CHIP to Address Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)*, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (7 January 2021), [medicaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/sho21001_0.pdf](https://www.medicare.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/sho21001_0.pdf).

⁵ *Additional Guidance on Use of In Lieu of Services and Settings in Medicaid Managed Care*, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (4 January 2023), [medicaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/smd23001.pdf](https://www.medicare.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/smd23001.pdf).

⁶ *Secretary Becerra Named Chair of U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness; Announces \$6.1 Million in New Measures on Affordable Housing and Support for Runaway Youth; Launches Housing and Services Partnership Accelerator*, Department of Health and Human Services (1 November 2023), [hhs.gov/about/news/2023/11/01/affordable-housing-support-for-runaway-youth.html](https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2023/11/01/affordable-housing-support-for-runaway-youth.html).

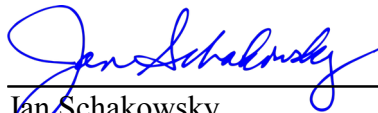
- In states where housing-related services have been covered through Medicaid, how have the health outcomes among their Medicaid beneficiaries changed?
- What statutory barriers exist that prevent CMS from addressing long-term housing-related needs for Medicaid beneficiaries requiring HCBS?

Thank you, and we stand ready in partnership as we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



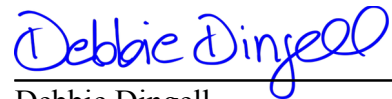
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