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October 3, 2017

The Honorable Elizabeth A. Warren
United States Senator
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warren,

I write to ask for your help to ensure Congress acts quickly to deliver federal fiscal support for three immediate priority health care services critical to low income people and children of Massachusetts. This includes stability of funding for cost sharing reductions (CSRs), as well as the reauthorizations of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the annual discretionary appropriations for the Community Health Center Fund, both of which expired on October 1.

More than 250,000 individuals receive health care coverage on the Massachusetts health care marketplace, known as the Connector. As we approach the start of Open Enrollment on November 1, it is critical for federal cost sharing reduction payments to be resolved affirmatively in order to maintain market stability and to constrain rate increases. The continued uncertainty surrounding CSR payments threatens to impact tens of thousands of people in Massachusetts.

The Connector estimates CSR payments for Plan Year 2018 to be \$146 million. As a result of the uncertainty, insurers have filed two sets of rates for ConnectorCare health plans. If Congress does not act to stabilize the insurance market by funding the CSRs, then 80,000 Connector members would directly experience premium increases of 20 percent or more in addition to potential disruption in their health care provider.

As I, along with four other Governors (Republican and Democrat), recently testified before Congress, immediate and affirmative resolution of CSR payments is imperative. It is also my hope that resolution of the CSR payments will be part of a broader bipartisan package designed to stabilize the market.

Another immediate health care priority is the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). As you know, federal authorization for this program expired October 1. Failure to reauthorize CHIP would result in an estimated reduction of \$295 million per year in federal funding for Massachusetts and would impact 160,000 children and youth, causing significant uncertainty for the families that rely on this program for health care services. Though CHIP funding may not immediately run out in Massachusetts, parents are already afraid that their children's insurance may be lost in the near future. With each passing week their fears continue to grow.

An additional immediate health care priority is the annual discretionary appropriations for the Community Health Center Fund that also expired on October 1. Community health centers serve over 25 million people in all 50 states and the US territories. Closer to home, our 58 community health centers service just under one million people (724,000 through federally qualified health centers and 264,000 through hospital affiliated centers). They are a backbone of our health care delivery system, providing access to lower cost care in underserved locations. For many states, including Massachusetts, this core funding provides a safety net for many of our lowest income children, adults and families which should be protected.

I request that on behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth, that Congress take action to provide the fiscal support for these health care services. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information on the importance of these programs to the people of Massachusetts. Thank you for all your efforts to ensure Congress delivers much-needed funding for these vital health care services.

Sincerely,



Charles D. Baker
Governor