

October 4, 2012

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

On behalf of the undersigned faith-based organizations committed to welcoming the stranger and humane reform of our immigration system, we write to you today to express our dismay at the exclusion of individuals receiving relief through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) from coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). We remain supportive of DACA and the opportunity it offers immigrant youth known as "DREAMers," but we ask you to reconsider this decision. Other groups who are currently offered deferred action qualify for affordable health care under the aforementioned health care programs. We believe that excluding these DREAMERS from coverage undercuts the spirit of both the DACA and ACA programs and establishes a dangerous precedent.

Under this exclusion, children as young as 15, pregnant women, and children with severe disabilities or chronic illness would be forced to seek treatment in emergency rooms or through other "safety-net" services at increased costs to their health and their local communities. While the ACA does not extend coverage to individuals unless they are "lawfully present in the United States," we believe the relief offered to DACA recipients should allow them access to the benefits of the Affordable Care Act. Those who are legally permitted to work in this country under DACA should not be excluded by a narrow interpretation of the ACA. A broader interpretation would be consistent with the ACA's goals of expanding coverage and reducing overall health care costs, and ensure that DACA recipients remain healthy, productive individuals as they seek to make the most of the education and employment opportunities offered under deferred action.

The decision to exclude DACA recipients from obtaining health care sets a troubling precedent. Opponents of DACA have already demonstrated their willingness to deny services to DREAMers, whether they are trying to obtain a driver's license or receive tuition breaks available to other students in their home state. We believe that these policies are discriminatory and that youth granted DACA relief should not be singled out from individuals granted deferred action through other avenues. We hope you will use this opportunity to affirm that the intent of the DACA program was to fully embrace immigrant youth as valued members of our society.

We urge you to reconsider the decision to exclude those granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals from access to affordable healthcare. We remain supportive of the DACA program and committed to working with the Administration to ensure that the DACA process is fair, transparent, and accomplishes its goals. We look forward to continuing to partner with the Administration and Congress to enact just and humane immigration policies and a permanent path to status for our undocumented brothers and sisters.

Sincerely,

African American Ministers In Action

American Friends Service Committee

American Jewish Committee (AJC)

Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Disciples Home Missions, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Disciples Justice Action Network

The Episcopal Church

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office

NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Sisters of Mercy Institute Justice Team

Union for Reform Judaism

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

Women of Reform Judaism

Cc:

Sally Howard, Chief of Staff to Secretary Sebelius

Valarie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to the President of the United States

Cecelia Muñoz, Director, White House Domestic Policy Council

Alejandro Mayorkas, Director, USCIS

Rebecca Carson, Chief of Staff to Director Mayorkas

Jon Carson, Director of the Office of Public Engagement, White House

Felicia Escobar, Senior Policy Director for Immigration, White House DPC

Tyler Moran, Deputy Policy Director for Immigration, White House, DPC

Julie Rodriguez, Associate Director of Public Engagement, White House

Cindy Mann, Director, Center for Medicaid and State Operations

Jeanne Lambrew, Deputy Assistant to the President for Health Policy

Liz Fowler, Special Assistant to the President for Healthcare and Economic Policy