



APPENDIX C

Waiver Amendment Public Comment Letters



VISION

Every Arizonan has a safe, affordable place to call home.

MISSION

The Arizona Housing Coalition (AZHC) is a collaborative association that leads in the efforts to end homelessness and provide safe, affordable housing to all Arizonans.



Arizona Housing Coalition

Speaking Up for Home and Hope

Speaking Up for Home and Hope

Joanna Carr
Arizona Housing Coalition
1495 E Osborn Road
Phoenix
85014

February 23rd 2023

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
c/o Division of Community Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations
801 E. Jefferson Street, MD 4200
Phoenix, AZ 85034

**VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION TO
waiverpublicinput@azahcccs.gov**

Dear AHCCCS,

The Arizona Housing Coalition respectfully submits this public comment in strong support of AHCCCS' Arizona Section 1115 Waiver Draft Amendment Request: Former Foster Youth Annual Automatic Renewal. The Arizona Housing Coalition is a collaborative member association, leading the efforts to end homelessness and advocate for safe, affordable homes for all Arizonans. We are working to create an Arizona where housing stability is universal, and every man, woman, child and veteran has a safe, affordable place to call home. As an advocate for children's health and health equity in Arizona, the Arizona Housing Coalition is in full support of the draft Section 1115.

The waiver will promote continuity of health care and coverage for former foster youth ages 18 to 26 by requiring AHCCCS to automatically renew their eligibility for Young Adult Transitional Insurance (YATI). It will also simplify administration of YATI and reduce health disparities for former foster youth.

Youth who experience foster care have a high risk of chronic health conditions and health related social needs, including physical and behavioral health needs, adverse childhood experiences that can lead to serious health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression and anxiety. To address these heightened health risks and to put foster youth on parity with youth who have not experienced foster care, The Affordable Care Act allows former foster youth to stay enrolled in Medicaid until age 26, regardless of income. But young adults who have aged out of the foster care system in Arizona frequently experience barriers and red tape that threaten their coverage.

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Arizona Housing Coalition

Speaking Up for Home and Hope

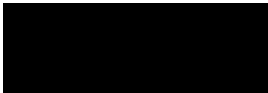
Speaking Up for Home and Hope

Although young people who turn age 18 in foster care are assisted by the Department of Child Safety (DCS) in initially enrolling in YATI, many lose their coverage at the point of renewal. Youth transitioning from foster care experience high rates of housing instability and enrollment. For many, renewal paperwork or other requests for information from the agency are mailed to an address that they no longer have any affiliation with after turning 18 - often a group home where they no longer live, or a DCS Case Manager's office address. Former foster youth cannot respond to letters they never receive and are often unaware that they've lost coverage until they show up at a doctor's office or emergency department in need of care, at which point they may have also missed the period they have to appeal the decision.

By allowing for the annual, automatic renewal of eligibility until age 26, the Draft Amendment will ensure continuity of health coverage for former foster youth. With the amendment, former foster youth between 18 and 26 years old will not have to worry about losing coverage due to red tape. The agency will still be able to move people to other categories as needed (for example, during pregnancy) and can disenroll the individual if they are enrolled in Medicaid in another state or if they choose to be. This will help ensure young people can stay connected to the health and mental health resources they need as they navigate adulthood.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on, and offer support for, the Draft Amendment.

Sincerely,



Joanna Carr
Interim Executive Director
The Arizona Housing Coalition

Beth Rosenberg

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
c/o Division of Community Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations
801 E. Jefferson Street, MD 4200
Phoenix, AZ 85034

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION TO waiverpublicinput@azahcccs.gov

Dear AHCCCS:

I respectfully submit this public comment in strong support of AHCCCS' Arizona Section 1115 Waiver Draft Amendment Request: Former Foster Youth Annual Automatic Renewal. I am currently retired but worked for more than four decades within Arizona state government and in a non-profit agency as an advocate for children and youth in the child welfare arena. Young people aging out of foster care was a primary concern and interest in my work. As an advocate for children's health and health equity in Arizona, I am in full support of the draft Section 1115.

The waiver will promote continuity of health care and coverage for former foster youth ages 18 to 26 by requiring AHCCCS to automatically renew their eligibility for Young Adult Transitional Insurance (YATI). It will also simplify administration of YATI and reduce health disparities for former foster youth.

Youth who experience foster care have a high risk of chronic health conditions and health related social needs, including physical and behavioral health needs, adverse childhood experiences that can lead to serious health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression and anxiety. To address these heightened health risks and to put foster youth on parity with youth who have not experienced foster care, The Affordable Care Act allows former foster youth to stay enrolled in Medicaid until age 26, regardless of income. But young adults who have aged out of the foster care system in Arizona frequently experience barriers and red tape that threaten their coverage.

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youth between 18 and 26 years old will not have to worry about losing coverage due to red tape. The agency will still be able to move people to other categories as needed (for example, during pregnancy) and can disenroll the individual if they are enrolled in Medicaid in another state or if they choose to be. This will help ensure young people can stay connected to the health and mental health resources they need as they navigate adulthood.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on, and offer support for, the Draft Amendment.

Sincerely,

Beth Rosenberg
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February 22, 2023

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
c/o Division of Community Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations
801 E. Jefferson Street, MD 4200
Phoenix, AZ 85034

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION TO waiverpublicinput@azahcccs.gov

Dear AHCCCS:

Child & Family Resources, Inc. respectfully submits this public comment in strong support of AHCCCS' Arizona Section 1115 Waiver Draft Amendment Request: Former Foster Youth Annual Automatic Renewal. Our organization has a 53 year history providing child welfare and prevention services across Arizona. We care deeply about ensuring that all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential, and without health insurance, the odds are that much more challenging for youth aging out of the foster care system. We strongly support children's health and health equity in Arizona, and urge approval of this waiver.

The waiver will promote continuity of health care and coverage for former foster youth ages 18 to 26 by requiring AHCCCS to automatically renew their eligibility for Young Adult Transitional Insurance (YATI). It will also simplify administration of YATI and reduce health disparities for former foster youth.

Youth who experience foster care have a high risk of chronic health conditions and health related social needs, including physical and behavioral health needs, adverse childhood experiences that can lead to serious health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression and anxiety. To address these heightened health risks and to put foster youth on parity with youth who have not experienced foster care, The Affordable Care Act allows former foster youth to stay enrolled in Medicaid until age 26, regardless of income. But young adults who have aged out of the foster care system in Arizona frequently experience barriers and red tape that threaten their coverage.

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are enrolled in Medicaid in another state or if they choose to be. This will help ensure young people can stay connected to the health and mental health resources they need as they navigate adulthood.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on, and offer support for, the Draft Amendment.

Sincerely,



Eric Schindler, Ph.D.
President/CEO



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February 27, 2023

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
c/o Division of Community Advocacy and
Intergovernmental Relations
801 E. Jefferson Street, MD 4200
Phoenix, AZ 85034

**VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION TO:
waiverpublicinput@azahcccs.gov**

Dear AHCCCS:

Children's Action Alliance (CAA) respectfully submits this public comment in strong support of AHCCCS' Arizona Section 1115 Waiver Draft Amendment Request: Former Foster Youth Annual Automatic Renewal. Through research, publications, media campaigns, and advocacy, CAA seeks to influence policies and decisions affecting the lives of Arizona children and their families on issues related to health, child abuse and neglect, early care and

education, budget and taxes, juvenile justice, children and immigration, and working families. CAA worked in partnership with Fostering Advocates Arizona, a group of transition-age foster youth, to pass House Bill 2622 which requires this amendment to Arizona's Section 1115 waiver. As an advocate for children's health and health equity in Arizona, Children's Action Alliance and Fostering Advocates Arizona are in full support of the draft amendment.

The waiver will promote continuity of health care and coverage for former foster youth ages 18 to 26 by requiring AHCCCS to automatically renew their eligibility for Young Adult Transitional Insurance (YATI). It will also simplify administration of YATI and reduce health disparities for former foster youth.


Youth who experience foster care have a high risk of chronic health conditions and health related social needs, including physical and behavioral health needs, adverse childhood experiences that can lead to serious health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression and anxiety. To address these heightened health risks and to put foster youth on parity with youth who have not experienced foster care, The Affordable Care Act allows former foster youth to stay enrolled in Medicaid until age 26, regardless of income. But young adults who have aged out of the foster care system in Arizona frequently experience barriers and red tape that threaten their coverage.

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(DCS) in initially enrolling in YATI, many lose their coverage at the point of renewal. Youth transitioning from foster care experience high rates of housing instability and enrollment. For many, renewal paperwork or other requests for information from the agency are mailed to an address that they no longer have any affiliation with after turning 18 - often a group home where they no longer live, or a DCS Case Manager's office address. Former foster youth cannot respond to letters they never receive and are often unaware that they've lost coverage until they show up at a doctor's office or emergency department in need of care, at which point they may have also missed the period they have to appeal the decision.

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Sincerely,


David Lujan
President and CEO

William E. Morris Institute for Justice

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February 27, 2023

waiverpublicinput@azahcccs.gov

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
Division of Community Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations
801 E. Jefferson Street, MD 4200
Phoenix, Arizona 85034

Re: Comments to Arizona's Section 1115
Demonstration Waiver Request: Former
Foster Care Youth Annual Automatic
Renewal

Dear AHCCCS:

The William E. Morris Institute for Justice (“MIJ”) is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the most basic civil and human rights of low-income Arizonans. As part of our work, we focus on issues affecting public benefit programs, such as Medicaid. Our advocacy ensures that Medicaid applicants and recipients receive fair eligibility determinations and redeterminations, and receive continuity of care and coverage where possible.

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (“AHCCCS”) is responsible for the processing of applications and recertifications for former foster care children under 26 years of age into the Young Adult Transitional Insurance (“YATI”) category of Medicaid, after they age out of foster care. In 2022, the Arizona Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, House Bill 2622 (“HB 2622”). The bill, made subject to the approval of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (“CMS”), requires AHCCCS to automatically renew the eligibility of young adults in the YATI category without requiring additional information from the person, unless the person notifies AHCCCS that they moved out of Arizona or has provided information indicating that the person may qualify for Medicaid coverage under a different eligibility category. In compliance with HB 2622, AHCCCS requested from CMS a five-year Medicaid Section 1115 Demonstration Waiver to implement the bill. In its request, AHCCCS specifically asks CMS to “waive the condition of eligibility in 42 C.F.R. § 435.608 requiring

Medicaid beneficiaries to apply for other cash benefits for the Former Foster Youth population.”

MIJ submits these comments in support of AHCCCS’s proposed demonstration waiver. Our comments are detailed further below.

I. AHCCCS’s Proposed 1115 Demonstration Waiver Furthers the Purpose of the Medicaid Program

The Social Security Act grants the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services limited authority to waive the requirements of the Medicaid program, authorized by XIX of the Act. The Social Security Act allows the Secretary to grant a “[w]aiver of State plan requirements” in 42 U.S.C. § 1396a in the case of an “experimental, pilot, or demonstration project.” 42 U.S.C. § 1315(a). The Secretary may only approve a project which is “likely to assist in promoting the objectives” of Title XIX and may only “waive compliance with any of the requirements [of the Act] ... to the extent and for the period necessary” for the state to carry out the project. *Id.*

In addition, the record must show the Secretary considered the impact of the demonstration project on those the Medicaid Act was enacted to protect. *Newton-Nations v. Betlach*, 660 F.3d 370, 380 (9th Cir. 2011)(relying upon *Beno v. Shalala*, 30 F.3d 1057, 1069 (9th Cir. 1994)). Finally, several circuit courts have held that the objective of the Medicaid Act is to provide medical assistance to those who cannot afford it. *Gresham v. Azar*, 950 F.3d 93, 99-100 (D.C. Cir. 2020)(collecting cases).

In its request, Arizona states that two of the proposed waiver’s goals request is to “[p]romote continuity of care and coverage” and to “[m]ove toward administrative simplification.” The waiver, and the implementation of HB 2622, would promote the objectives of the Medicaid program, particularly recent amendments to the program, by eliminating unnecessary barriers to enrollment and ensuring continuous access to care for former foster care youth.

The Affordable Care Act

In 2014, the Affordable Care Act added former foster care children as a special group under mandatory eligibility for Medicaid. According to 42 U.S.C. § 1396a(a)(10)(A)(i)(IX), states “must” provide medical coverage through the Medicaid program to people:

(IX) who—

(aa) are under 26 years of age;

(bb) are not described in or enrolled under any of subclauses (I) through (VII) of this clause or are described in any of such subclauses but have income that exceeds the level of income applicable under the State plan for eligibility to enroll for medical assistance under such subclause;

(cc) were in foster care under the responsibility of the State on the date of attaining 18 years of age or such higher age as the State has elected under section 675(8)(B)(iii) of this title; and

(dd) were enrolled in the State plan under this subchapter or under a waiver of the plan while in such foster care;

This means that individuals who age out of foster care are presumptively eligible for Medicaid coverage through the former foster care category until they turn 26 years old. There are no income eligibility or asset test requirements for this category. In Arizona, this category is known as the YATI category. Pursuant to the statutory language set forth above, and – specifically – the mandatory term *must* used in the prefatory clause of 42 U.S.C. § 1396a(a), the YATI category is a mandatory Medicaid coverage category for former foster youth.

The Final Rule of the Affordable Care Act

In addition, the 2016 final rule of the Affordable Care Act implemented provisions of the law that expanded access to Medicaid health coverage. Final Rule of the Affordable Care Act, 81 Fed. Reg. 86382 (Jan. 20, 2017). One of the added provisions was 42 C.F.R. § 435.150, which implemented 42 U.S.C § 1396a(a)(10)(A)(i)(IX). *Id.* at 86451-52. The federal regulation, 42 C.F.R. § 435.150, varies slightly from the statute discussed above and requires medical coverage for former foster care youth under age 26, who age out of care, and “[a]re not eligible **and** enrolled for mandatory coverage under §§ 435.110 through 435.145.” 42 C.F.R. § 435.150 (emphasis added). This change has significant consequences on the enrollment process for former foster care youth, which the preamble of the final rule discusses.

The preamble of the final rule does not require that a screening process occur before an individual is enrolled in YATI, but it does make clear that persons aging out of

foster care should be evaluated for mandatory categories, including the former foster care category, before their Medicaid coverage can be terminated:

Under § 435.916(f)(1) of the current regulations, states may not determine a current beneficiary to be ineligible before considering all bases of eligibility. In the case of individuals aging out of foster care on or after January 1, 2014 (the effective date for coverage under the former foster care group), this means that states cannot terminate Medicaid eligibility of an individual in foster care who attains age 18 or otherwise ages out of their foster care status without determining first whether such individual retains eligibility under another eligibility group. Individuals who age out or leave foster care may be eligible under the mandatory group for children under § 435.118, as a disabled individual under § 435.120 or § 435.121, as a pregnant woman under § 435.116, or as a parent or other caretaker relative under § 435.110.

Final Rule of the Affordable Care Act, 81 Fed. Reg. at 86406.

However, if the information necessary to enroll individuals in the other mandatory categories is unavailable, the preamble directs states to automatically enroll individuals in the former foster care category:

If the individual is eligible for the former foster care group and either the state determines the individual is ineligible for these other mandatory groups **or does not have sufficient information to determine eligibility under the other groups, the state should transition the individual to the former foster care group without interruption in Medicaid coverage or need to submit additional information.** *Id.* (emphasis added).

Under this direction, the state should automatically place the youth in the YATI category if it does not have sufficient evidence to place the foster care youth in another category without first requesting the information or engaging in further investigation. This analysis is specifically endorsed in the preamble and advances the plain meaning of the applicable statutory language enacted by Congress, evincing an intent to mandate Medicaid coverage for former foster youth.

Further, the preamble provides additional direction on how former foster care youth should be transitioned into the former foster care youth category:

We recommend the use of automated transition of individuals to the former foster care group within a state, and we remind states of the availability of enhanced federal funding for Medicaid eligibility and enrollment systems (“90/10” funding) to support such automated systems. *Id.*

The SUPPORT Act

In October 2018, Congress passed Public Law 115-271, the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities (“SUPPORT”) Act. 132 Stat. 3894 (2018). Although the law was intended to primarily address the opioid epidemic, the SUPPORT Act also addressed existing issues with the former foster care youth category, including those discussed in the 2016 final rule of the Affordable Care Act, and makes several amendments to existing law. Pub. L. No. 115-271, § 1001, 132 Stat. at 3901-3903.

The SUPPORT Act addressed the screening and verification issues for foster care youth by amending the language in 42 U.S.C. § 1396a(a)(10)(A)(i)(IX). The revised statute now reflects the language in 42 C.F.R. § 435.150, and provides that former foster care youth, who are under age 26, have aged out of the care, and “are not described in *and* enrolled under” any other subclauses are eligible for medical coverage under the former foster care category. *Id.* at 3902 (emphasis added). Thus, these youth are eligible for Medicaid through the YATI program unless they are already enrolled in another Medicaid category. With this change, states cannot engage in hierarchical screening processes with this particular mandatory coverage group.

The SUPPORT Act’s revisions went into effect on January 1, 2023, but only applies to “foster youth who attain 18 years of age on or after January 1, 2023.” This means that the original eligibility requirements for the former foster care group, including any screening processes, will continue to apply to youth who turned 18 before January 1, 2023.¹ CMS, however, encourages states to submit a new section 1115 demonstration or an amendment to an existing 1115 demonstration to apply the new eligibility

¹ Center Medicaid and Medicare Services, SHR# 22-003 RE: Coverage of Youth Formerly in Foster Care in Medicaid (Section 1002(a) of the SUPPORT Act). (Dec. 16, 2022), <https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/sho22003.pdf>.

requirements to all former foster care youth, even if they turned 18 prior to January 1, 2023.²

Arizona's proposed 1115 demonstration waiver request to automatically renew the eligibility of former foster care youth is in line with the objectives of the Medicaid program to ensure healthcare coverage for those who cannot afford it. The demonstration waiver request further complies with the objectives of the Affordable Care Act's amendments to the Medicaid program and accompanying guidance for implementing those changes. Finally, the demonstration waiver request is in line with the SUPPORT Act's intentions and follows CMS's guidance.

II. The Proposed Waiver Will Help Reduce Eligibility Churn for Former Foster Care Youth

Arizona's proposed 1115 demonstration waiver states that a goal of the waiver is to "[r]educe unnecessary eligibility churn." "Churn" is the temporary loss of Medicaid coverage in which benefit recipients disenroll and then re-enroll within a short period. Evidence indicates that Medicaid recipients who experience churn are more likely to experience difficulties in getting medical care and are more likely to end up in the hospital with a preventable condition.³ Churn can occur for many reasons, but churn commonly occurs during the recertification process when a recipient fails to provide additional information necessary to determine eligibility.⁴

Beginning in 2017, MIJ became concerned that many former foster care children were not being properly enrolled in the YATI category and/or were being improperly disenrolled from the category at recertification. After numerous public records requests, letters and telephone calls with AHCCCS, we came to understand that eligibility workers were not enrolling or re-enrolling youth in the YATI category until they determined the youth's eligibility for other mandatory Medicaid categories.

² *Id.*

³ Bradley Coallo et al., *Medicaid Enrollment Churn and Implications for Continuous Coverage Policies*, Kaiser Family Foundation, <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/medicaid-enrollment-churn-and-implications-for-continuous-coverage-policies/#:~:text=The%20temporary%20loss%20of%20Medicaid,occurs%20for%20a%20several%20reasons..>

⁴ *Id.*

The consequence of this practice was that many qualified YATI applicants' enrollment or recertification were stalled, or even denied, simply because there was a possibility the youth might fit into another Medicaid eligibility category. If that other category required additional information, such as income, and that information was not obtained, then the youth's YATI application may have been denied. A recipient's coverage could similarly be denied at recertification.

By automatically renewing the Medicaid eligibility of former foster care youth, the proposed waiver and implementation of HB 2622 will help to greatly reduce churn for this eligibility category. It will also eliminate the practice of considering irrelevant information to stall, or to deny, YATI enrollment or recertification to a population for whom Medicaid coverage is mandatory by definition and statutory command.

III. The Proposed Waiver Will Help Reduce Health Disparities for Former Foster Care Youth

Arizona also states that a goal of automatically renewing Medicaid coverage for former foster care youth is to “[r]educe health disparities for the target population.” Children in foster care have documented increased health needs compared to children not in foster care.⁵ Children in foster care are often exposed to many adverse experiences during childhood, including poverty, abuse, neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, and placement changes, and that exposure can lead to a wide array of health needs.⁶ Those health problems and increased needs persist to young adulthood, long after the youth has left foster care.⁷ Former foster care youth experience higher rates of many chronic health issues, such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and asthma.⁸

⁵ The American Academy of Pediatrics, *Health Care Issues for Children and Adolescents in Foster Care and Kinship Care*, Pediatrics (2015); 136(4):e1131-e1140, <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/136/4/e1131/73819/Health-Care-Issues-for-Children-and-Adolescents-in>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Kym R. Ahrens et al., *Health Outcomes in Young Adults from Foster Care and Economically Diverse Backgrounds*, Pediatrics (2014); 134(6):1067-1074, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4243069/>.

⁸ *Id.*

In addition, former foster care youth have higher occurrences of mental health issues and experience other hardships, such as homelessness or housing instability.⁹

The proposed waiver will help ensure that former foster care youth have continuity of coverage and care. This will ensure that former foster care youth health needs are met and help decrease health inequities and other hardships for these young adults.

IV. Arizona's Proposed 1115 Demonstration Waiver Should Include an Outreach Component

As part of its proposed demonstration waiver, we propose that Arizona include a robust outreach plan to former foster care youth who are no longer enrolled in Medicaid under the YATI category, but based on information that AHCCCS has available, may still be eligible for benefits. Due to the screening processes used by AHCCCS, many of these youth may have been removed from Medicaid enrollment for failure to respond to the agency or to provide requested information. AHCCCS must reevaluate these cases, reenroll eligible youth, and notify eligible youth of these changes.

Further, to ensure that disenrolled former foster care youth are aware of Arizona's changes in enrollment and recertification pursuant to the demonstration waiver, AHCCCS must engage in a state-wide publicity campaign. The campaign should target areas and industries most likely to be frequented by young adults 18-26 years of age. Some examples include community colleges, trade schools, job fairs, shelters providing services to unhoused individuals, community centers, advocate organizations for youth, and universities.

Including a robust outreach plan to former foster care youth throughout the state will further the purpose of the Medicaid program and help ensure that a population that is subject to vulnerabilities receive the medical coverage that they are entitled to receive.

Conclusion

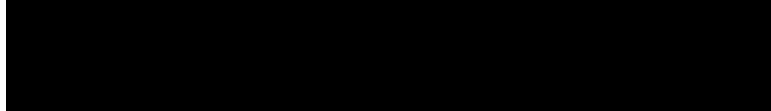
For all the above reasons, the William E. Morris Institute for Justice supports Arizona's proposed 1115 demonstration waiver. The demonstration waiver and the implementation of HB 2622 will promote the objectives of the Medicaid program and

⁹ Amy Dworsky et al., *Homelessness During the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood*, *Am J. Public Health* (Dec. 2013); 103 (Suppl 2): S318-S323, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3969135/>.

AHCCCS
February 27, 2023
Page 9

will positively impact former foster care youth by ensuring their healthcare needs are met.

Sincerely,



Brenda Muñoz Furnish

Arizona Chapter

INCORPORATED IN ARIZONA

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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Programs

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Arizona Pediatric Quality Improvement Institute

Arizona Pediatric COVID-19 Training Center

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Reach Out and Read Arizona

February 28, 2023

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
c/o Division of Community Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations
801 E. Jefferson Street, MD 4200
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Dear AHCCCS:

The Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AzAAP) respectfully submits this public comment in strong support of AHCCCS' Arizona Section 1115 Waiver Draft Amendment Request: Former Foster Youth Annual Automatic Renewal.

The AZAAP is the largest professional association of pediatric physicians and other pediatric health care providers in Arizona and is a chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. As advocates for children's health and health equity in Arizona, we believe that all children, adolescents, and young adults from birth to the age of 26 years must have access to high-quality health care. This waiver will promote continuity of health care and coverage for former foster youth ages 18 to 26 by requiring AHCCCS to automatically renew their eligibility for Young Adult Transitional Insurance (YATI). It will also simplify administration of YATI and reduce health disparities for former foster youth.

Youth who experience foster care commonly have chronic health conditions including physical and behavioral health needs. These serious health problems include obesity, diabetes, physical disabilities, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. To address these health problems, the Affordable Care Act allows former foster youth to stay enrolled in Medicaid until age 26, regardless of income.

Although young people who turn age 18 in foster care are assisted by the Department of Child Safety (DCS) in initially enrolling in YATI, these young people face multiple barriers that threaten their continuous access to health care coverage. Many of them lose their coverage at the point of renewal because of their high rates of housing instability and lack of experience in completing the required paperwork for renewal. For example, renewal paperwork or other requests for information often is mailed to a group home where they no longer live or to a caseworker who is no longer working with the young adult.

Arizona Chapter

INCORPORATED IN ARIZONA

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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Programs

Arizona Center for Emotional and Behavioral Health

Arizona Child Fatality Review

Arizona Pediatric Quality Improvement Institute

Arizona Pediatric COVID-19 Training Center

Medical Services Project

Pediatric Prepared Emergency Care

Reach Out and Read Arizona

By allowing for the annual, automatic renewal of eligibility until age 26, the Draft Amendment will ensure continuity of health coverage for these former foster youth. With the amendment, former foster youth between 18 and 26 years old will not have to worry about losing coverage due to their unstable housing and lack of experience handling the paperwork of insurance renewal. The agency will still be able to move people to other categories as needed (for example, during pregnancy) and can disenroll the individual if they are enrolled in Medicaid in another state. Automatic renewal will help ensure these young people can stay connected to the health and mental health resources they need.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on, and offer support for, the Draft Amendment.

Sincerely,



Mary Ellen Rimsza, MD, FAAP
AzAAP Advocacy Committee Chair

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Center

Medical Services Project

Pediatric Prepared Emergency Care

Reach Out and Read Arizona

Sincerely,

[signature]

CC or Enclosures:



February 27, 2023

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
c/o Division of Community Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations
801 E. Jefferson Street, MD 4200
Phoenix, AZ 85034

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION TO waiverpublicinput@azahcccs.gov

Dear AHCCCS:

The Arizona Council of Human Service Providers respectfully submits this public comment in strong support of AHCCCS' Arizona Section 1115 Waiver Draft Amendment Request: Former Foster Youth Annual Automatic Renewal.

The Arizona Council of Human Service Providers is a 501(c)(6) membership association. We provide advocacy and support to over 100 behavioral health and substance use, child welfare, juvenile justice, and whole person integrated health care organizations across Arizona. These organizations range in size and scope and employ over 30,000 staff throughout more than 900 facilities and serve approximately 1 million community members across the state. As an advocate for children's health and health equity in Arizona, we are in full support of the draft Section 1115.

The waiver will promote continuity of health care and coverage for former foster youth ages 18 to 26 by requiring AHCCCS to automatically renew their eligibility for Young Adult Transitional Insurance (YATI). It will also simplify administration of YATI and reduce health disparities for former foster youth.

Youth who experience foster care have a high risk of chronic health conditions and health related social needs, including physical and behavioral health needs, adverse childhood experiences that can lead to serious health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression and anxiety. To address these heightened health risks and to put foster youth on parity with youth who have not experienced foster care, The Affordable Care Act allows former foster youth to stay enrolled in Medicaid until age 26, regardless of income. But young adults who have aged out of the foster care system in Arizona frequently experience barriers and red tape that threaten their coverage.

Although young people who turn age 18 in foster care are assisted by the Department of Child Safety (DCS) in initially enrolling in YATI, many lose their coverage at the point of renewal. Youth transitioning from foster care experience high rates of housing instability and enrollment.



ARIZONA COUNCIL

OF HUMAN SERVICE PROVIDERS

For many, renewal paperwork or other requests for information from the agency are mailed to an address that they no longer have any affiliation with after turning 18 - often a group home where they no longer live, or a DCS Case Manager's office address. Former foster youth cannot respond to letters they never receive and are often unaware that they've lost coverage until they show up at a doctor's office or emergency department in need of care, at which point they may have also missed the period they have to appeal the decision.

By allowing for the annual, automatic renewal of eligibility until age 26, the Draft Amendment will ensure continuity of health coverage for former foster youth. With the amendment, former foster youth between 18 and 26 years old will not have to worry about losing coverage due to red tape. The agency will still be able to move people to other categories as needed (for example, during pregnancy) and can disenroll the individual if they are enrolled in Medicaid in another state or if they choose to be. This will help ensure young people can stay connected to the health and mental health resources they need as they navigate adulthood.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on, and offer support for, the Draft Amendment.

In Partnership

[REDACTED]

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