

July 18, 2003

The Honorable Charles Grassley  
SH-135 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Grassley:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing in support of an extension and improvement of the Transitional Medical Assistance (TMA) program.

Established in 1988, the TMA program provides temporary health care coverage to families who have become ineligible for Medicaid because of earnings, in many cases because they have left welfare for work. Like child care, health care is an important work support that facilitates the entry of families into the workforce. TMA is also a critical program for women, providing a safety net of health coverage for women transitioning to new jobs after welfare and ensuring continued access to health coverage for those whose health problems limit their ability to work. Poor women who receive or leave welfare are more likely to have health problems than other women – for them, continuing access to health coverage as they transition off of welfare is a determining factor in their ability to achieve long-term economic independence for their families.

Unfortunately, the TMA program expires at the end of this fiscal year. An extension of TMA constitutes an essential component of any legislation that would reauthorize the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program.

We are concerned that the effort to extend the TMA program, which has always been an integral part of bipartisan welfare reform legislation in the past, is not included in your current TANF reauthorization proposal. TMA has always enjoyed strong bipartisan support – when the program was **included** as part of TANF in 1996, it was passed in the Senate by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 97 to 2. We urge you to either make the TMA program permanent or, at minimum, to extend TMA for the same period of time as the Congress intends to reauthorize the TANF program. This would guarantee the important role that TMA plays in helping many families transition from welfare and forgo the need for Congress to address this issue again next year.

We also urge you to provide states additional flexibility to simplify the enrollment and retention of working families in TMA. Currently, states have little ability to ease federal rules that often discourage families from obtaining health coverage through TMA. Bills enjoying bipartisan support in both the House and Senate would provide states a number of such simplification options that would improve participation in TMA by eligible

families at modest cost. The White House has also endorsed many of these simplifications by including them as part of its FY 2004 budget. We ask that you adopt these bipartisan simplification provisions as part of any TMA extension.

Together, a long-term extension of TMA and additional state simplification options would ensure that the families who qualify for TMA have access to the health care they need as they initially enter the workforce. This, in turn, would strengthen our ability to meet the goal of welfare reform to effectively move more families from welfare to work.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American Counseling Association  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Network of Community Options and Resources  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Public Health Association  
Americans for Democratic Action  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Health Care  
Association for Health Center Affiliated Plans  
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs  
Association of University Centers on Disability  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Center for Adolescent Health & the Law  
Center for Community Change  
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children's Defense Fund  
Consumers Union  
Easter Seals  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Families USA  
Generations United  
Legal Action Center  
Lutheran Services in America  
March of Dimes  
NAADAC: The Association for Addiction Professionals  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association of Developmental Disabilities Councils

National Association of Mental Health Planning and Advisory Councils  
National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses  
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems  
National Association of School Nurses  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Education Association  
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National Health Law Program  
National Mental Health Association  
National Partnership for Women and Families  
National Urban League  
National Women's Health Network  
National Women's Law Center  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) Washington Office  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Service Employees International Union  
State Associations of Addiction Services (SAAS)  
The Alan Guttmacher Institute  
The Arc of the United States  
Title II Community AIDS National Network (TIICANN)  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations  
United Cerebral Palsy  
USAction  
Voices for America's Children  
Welfare Law Center  
Women of Reform Judaism