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May 29, 2012

Bob R. Jr. Mullins, M.D, MPH

Commissioner

Alabama Medicaid Agency

P.O. Box 5624

Montgomery, AL 36103-5624

Dear Commissioner Mullins:

Last year marked a groundbreaking year in the HIV field with a research study—named the scientific breakthrough of the year by *Science* magazine—documenting that HIV treatment not only saves the lives of people with HIV infection, but dramatically reduces the risk of HIV transmission.

Despite the availability of effective HIV treatment and the benefits of treatment to public health—one in five people with HIV remain undiagnosed and fewer than 50 percent of people with HIV are in regular medical care. I am writing on behalf of the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) to share resources that you can use as a health policy leader to address these disparities, particularly as you implement health care reform.

HIVMA represents more than 4,800 medical providers and researchers working on the frontlines of the HIV epidemic in communities across the U.S. On behalf of our members and their patients, we urge you to consider the following recommendations to fully leverage the potential of health reform to address the HIV public health crisis and help to end AIDS in the U.S.

Support Chronic Disease Management/Medical Home Care for People with HIV Infection:

The Ryan White Program has supported the development of a highly effective patient-centered medical home model for managing HIV infection. We strongly urge you to build on the success of the Ryan White Program by adopting the key components of the HIV care model as described in the attached paper, *The Essential Components of Effective HIV Care*.

Ensure Regular Access to HIV Medical Providers:

HIV infection is a complex, chronic condition that requires unique medical expertise and experience. Experienced HIV medical providers deliver higher quality and more cost effective care. HIV medicine does not fall under the purview of any one medical specialty, and similar to other chronic conditions, HIV medical providers regardless of their specialty training often serve as their patients' primary care and HIV provider. Policies that ensure inclusion of qualified HIV medical providers in health plan provider networks and that support streamlined access to HIV medical providers are important to support successful management of HIV disease.

Examples of effective policies include standing referrals to HIV medical providers and the option of designating HIV medical providers, including infectious diseases specialists, as primary care providers. The attached policy statement, *Qualifications for Physicians Who Manage the Longitudinal HIV Treatment of Patients with HIV*, outlines HIVMA's recommendations for identifying qualified HIV providers.

Support HIV Care and Treatment Standards: The Department of Health and Human Services and national associations, such as HIVMA, maintain clinical guidelines and recommendations for HIV care and treatment, including quality measures to evaluate these standards. Benefit coverage design and reimbursement policies, including the development of the Essential Health Benefits standard, must be informed by these widely-recognized standards. Federal treatment guidelines are maintained at www.aidsinfo.gov and HIVMA guidelines are available at www.hivma.org.

Expand Access to HIV Care Now: The anticipated expansion of health coverage in 2014 will offer an unprecedented opportunity to improve access to HIV care and treatment, but we cannot afford two more years of the status quo. We urge states to take immediate steps to address disparities in HIV care, such as using the Section 1115 waiver process to expand access to Medicaid for people with HIV before they become disabled and adopting the new health home benefit for people with HIV infection. See the attached paper, *Solutions Needed to Address the HIV Public Health Crisis in the United States: Addendum to Implications of the HIV Prevention Trial Network (HPTN) Study 052*.

With recent scientific discoveries and the promise of meaningful health care reform – we are at a pivotal moment in the fight against HIV infection. Please consider HIVMA and its state-based members a resource as you make critical health policy decisions that will determine the fate of people living with and at risk for HIV infection in your state and across the country. Please contact the HIVMA executive director Andrea Weddle at aweddle@hivma.org or (703) 299-0915 to discuss these issues further or to connect with HIVMA members in your state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Judith A. Aberg".

Judith A. Aberg, MD, FIDSA
Chair, HIV Medicine Association

Attachments

- *Essential Components of Effective HIV Care*
- *Solutions Needed to Address the HIV Public Health Crisis in the United States: Addendum to Implications of the HIV Prevention Trial Network (HPTN) Study 052*
- *Qualifications for Physicians Who Manage the Longitudinal HIV Treatment of Patients with HIV*