RE: Permanently Close the Coverage Gap in Reconciliation to Improve the Health of our Neighbors in Non-Expansion States

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer,

Thank you for your longstanding leadership on increasing and protecting comprehensive, quality and affordable health care for so many Americans. We have taken monumental steps to improve health care for Americans, but unfortunately too many hardworking individuals and families across America are currently without coverage that would safeguard their health and their pocketbook. For too long, politicians in our states have played politics with the lives of the 2.2 million people who would qualify for Medicaid expansion.\(^1\) As Congressional members from the 12 non-expansion states, we strongly urge you to include language to permanently close the Medicaid coverage gap in reconciliation.

We have heard from our constituents about how having quality, affordable health care would help address health and financial disparities. As members of the Tri-Caucus wrote in a letter last month, “Closing the coverage gap is one of the single most important steps we can take to reduce health inequities across the United States, as almost 60 percent of people affected by the coverage gap are Black, Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander.”\(^2\) Closing the coverage gap would positively impact coverage for children. Hispanic children in non-expansion states are 2.5 times more likely to be uninsured.\(^3\) We know that getting parents covered, helps get kids covered. Low-wage workers in our states - many of whom have been on the frontlines during the Covid pandemic – will be big winners if we close the coverage gap. In Florida, for example, the most common jobs for uninsured low-wage workers are cashiers, cooks, waiters, retail salespersons and construction workers.\(^4\) We owe it to our hardworking, underserved and marginalized communities to fight for their health care, since so many “leaders” in their states refuse.


We must seize the opportunity to **take action now** to close the coverage gap by including language to do so in the upcoming reconciliation package. Just last week, a group of House members introduced a bill that would establish a Medicaid-fall back option.\(^5\) We could also build off the successful Affordable Care Act Marketplace or create a combination of both. Another approach many of us have joined would empower local governments to expand Medicaid coverage with the same federal resources state leaders have rejected. No matter what path is taken, we must ensure it is permanent, comprehensive and closely mirrors the unique benefits currently included in Medicaid. We must come together to develop a lasting proposal that will cover the 2.2 million Americans who have been left behind by dangerous ideology in our state capitols.

Permanently closing the coverage gap is vital to ensuring all Americans have health care, economic security and better health outcomes. We have a unique opportunity with reconciliation to finally tear down the remaining barriers to health coverage for our neighbors in non-expansion states. We stand ready to work with you to push this policy over the finish line and get all Americans covered.

Sincerely,

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Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

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Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

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Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

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Deborah K. Ross
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David E. Price
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Bennie Thompson  
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Lizzie Fletcher  
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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress  

/s/  

Charlie Crist  
Member of Congress