

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

January 11, 2012

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

We, the undersigned, are health advocacy organizations representing millions of patients and their families who will be dramatically impacted by the way in which Essential Health Benefits are defined. We are writing to ask that you allow us more time in which to offer comments in response to the Bulletin on Essential Benefits you announced on December 16, 2011.

The design of the Essential Health Benefits will directly impact the scope of health benefits and the well-being of over 70 million patients. Beneficiaries affected will be those covered in non-grandfathered plans in the individual and small group markets, the Medicaid benchmark, and other Basic Health Programs. Basically, these benefit sets will have far reaching implications for our entire health system. Weighing in on this decision is far too important to be done with anything less than careful and intensive deliberation.

A number of factors lead to a request for an extension of time: 1) the large number of people affected; 2) the enormous complexity of the issues which must be considered; 3) the fact that the Bulletin was released just before the long holiday period; and 4) the very short 45 day comment period. Therefore, we respectfully request that the comment period be extended by an additional 45 days until March 15, 2012.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully,

AIDS Action Committee of MA  
AIDS Foundation of Chicago  
The AIDS Institute  
AIDS United  
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association  
American Lung Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Society of Addiction Medicine  
The Arc of Illinois  
Arthritis Foundation  
California Institute for Mental Health  
California Society of Addiction Medicine  
California Mental Health Directors Association  
Campaign for Better Health Care, Illinois

Citizen Action/Illinois  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis  
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)  
Community Catalyst  
County Alcohol & Drug Program Administrators Association of California  
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America  
Elev8  
Epilepsy Foundation  
Harm Reduction Coalition  
Health & Disability Advocates  
HealthHIV  
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights  
Illinois Alcoholism & Drug Dependence Association  
Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities  
Illinois Chiropractic Society  
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition  
Illinois Public Health Association  
International Pemphigus Pemphigoid Foundation  
Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF)  
Lifelong AIDS Alliance  
Lupus Foundation of America  
Lupus Foundation of Mid and Northern New York, Inc.  
Lupus Research Institute National Coalition  
Men's Health Network  
Mental Health America  
Michigan Association of CMH Boards  
Minnesota Recovery Connection  
Nashville CARES  
National Alliance for Hispanic Health  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)  
National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Development Directors  
National Association of Hispanic Nurses  
National Athletic Trainers' Association  
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD)  
The National Grange  
National Minority Quality Forum  
National Organization for Rare Disorders  
National Patient Advocate Foundation  
National Psoriasis Foundation  
National Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities  
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable  
National Women's Law Center  
National Women's AIDS Collective (NWAC)  
The Neuropathy Association

OWL - The Voice For Midlife and Older Women  
Parkinson's Action Network  
Platelet Disorder Support Association  
Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association  
RetireSafe  
Scleroderma Foundation, Inc.  
Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation  
Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR)  
State Associations of Addiction Services  
Tennessee AIDS Advocacy Network  
Treatment Communities of America  
Veterans Health Council  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
The Watershed  
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease