

August 29, 2024

Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom
California Capitol
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

We greatly appreciate that the 2024-25 budget included funding to implement multi-year continuous Medi-Cal coverage for children ages 0 to 5. As a result, in 2026, an estimated 90,000 Medi-Cal children will be protected against unnecessarily losing their coverage, despite remaining eligible.

To meet the 2026 implementation date, the State must move forward now with important steps, such as submitting a request for federal approval, **as the window of opportunity to receive that approval may close at the end of this year**. The current federal administration supports and has approved multi-year continuous Medicaid coverage policies for children in other states. However, a possible change in administration next year could close that opportunity for California.

While the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) has several requests pending federal review and approval, submitting this multi-year continuous coverage request now would not jeopardize the timeliness and approval of DHCS' other federal requests. Instead, it would merely put the request in the queue and allow time for the federal public comment period to begin upon submission. Because the multi-year continuous request has been approved in several other states previously, this request is not difficult or time-consuming to review. It will not impede negotiations with DHCS' existing requests. The federal agency could consider consolidating approval of California's continuous coverage with other states' similar policy requests.

Through the 2022-2023 budget, California was one of the first states in the country to adopt a multi-year continuous Medi-Cal enrollment (MYCE) protection for young children. This means that children under five can keep their Medi-Cal coverage without any annual redeterminations, which can cause loss of coverage often due to administrative hurdles. To preserve Medi-Cal coverage for young children beginning in January 2026, the intended start date, California funded this policy in the 2024-2025 final budget.

DHCS has already developed a draft federal request proposal and received public comment earlier this year. By submitting this federal request now under the current federal administration, California's multi-year continuous coverage policy could be implemented by the intended start date of January 2026. **DHCS should submit that federal request now for the current administration to review and approve it.**

We do not want California's children to be left behind as similar policies are [being implemented or developed in 12 other states](#), including Oregon, Washington, and New Mexico (federally approved); Minnesota, Colorado, Hawaii, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania (pending federal approval); and Illinois, Ohio, and the District of Columbia (in development). We know California policymakers are committed to protecting children's Medi-Cal coverage and submitting a federal request as soon as possible allows this policy to remain viable for implementation.

Providing continuous Medi-Cal coverage is an important first step in achieving health equity for young children in California. Three-fourths of children covered by Medi-Cal are children of color. Medi-Cal is the primary source of coverage for children of color in California, and yet, Latine enrollees are more likely to lose their Medi-Cal coverage during the annual renewal process. By removing barriers to coverage and access, Medi-Cal can play a unique and critical role in addressing the structural racism that health disparities reveal.

Given your commitment to providing a healthy start for California's children, we **strongly urge you to direct DHCS to submit its federal request now—not next year when the opportunity for approval may be lost indefinitely**. Preserving and protecting children's Medi-Cal coverage is in your hands, please take advantage of this opportunity. Our organizations look forward to continued engagement with state partners on the timely implementation of this important protection.

Sincerely,

Abrazar, Inc.

Alliance for a Better Community

American Academy of Pediatrics, California

Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California

Asian Resources, Inc.

Brooke Frost & Associates

Buen Vecino

CA Alliance of Child and Family Services

California Black Health Network

California Children and Families Commission (F5CA)

California Immigrant Policy Center

California Latinas for Reproductive Justice

California Pan-Ethnic Health Network

California School-Based Health Alliance (CSHA)

California WIC Association

Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO)

Child Care Resource Center

Children Now

Children's Specialty Care Coalition

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, CHIRLA

CocoKids
Courage California
Early Matters Fresno
East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum
Family Voices of California
First 5 Association of California
First 5 Fresno County
First 5 Humboldt
First 5 Lassen
First 5 Los Angeles
First 5 Marin
First 5 Mendocino
First 5 Modoc
First 5 Mono
First 5 Orange County
First 5 Sacramento
First 5 San Benito
First 5 San Diego
First 5 San Mateo County
First 5 Santa Cruz County
First 5 Siskiyou Children and Families Commission
First 5 Solano
First 5 Tehama
First 5 Yolo
Fresno American Indian Health Project
Having Our Say Coalition
Health Access California
Healthy & Active Before 5
Healthy Contra Costa
Heluna Health
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective
Kidango
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
Los Angeles Unified School District
Lutheran Office of Public Policy- California
March of Dimes
Maternal Child Health Access
Multi-faith ACTION Coalition
National Center for Youth Law
National Council of Jewish Women CA
Pacific Clinics
Public Counsel
Rising Communities
San Diego for Every Child
San Francisco Dept of Early Childhood/First 5 San Francisco
South Bay People Power

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Sunset Youth Services
The Children's Partnership
The Latina Center
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
The Primary School
United Latino Voices of Contra Costa county
Village Community Resource Center
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Westside Family Preservation Services Network

Cc: Secretary Mark Ghaly, California Health And Human Services Agency;
DHCS Director Michelle Baass;
Senate President Pro Tempore Mike McGuire;
Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas;
Assembly Budget Committee Chair Jesse Gabriel;
Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1 Chair Akilah Weber;
Senate Budget Committee Chair Scott Wiener;
Senate Budget Subcommittee #3 Chair Caroline Menjivar