

February 18, 2019

The Honorable Tom Sherman
Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee
New Hampshire State Senate
LOB Room 101, 107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: AMA support for SB 290

Dear Chairman Sherman:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing in support of Senate Bill (SB) 290, legislation to amend the community engagement requirements in the New Hampshire Granite Advantage Health Care program.

The AMA believes everyone deserves quality health care. As physicians, we regularly confront the effects of lack of access to adequate care and know that Medicaid is an important—and often the only—source of consistent care for low-income individuals. The medical literature demonstrates the importance of Medicaid coverage for improving the health and welfare of low-income patients, particularly when compared to uninsured patients. Medicaid coverage is associated with improved long-term health, lower rates of mortality, better health outcomes and fewer hospitalizations, better educational outcomes and greater financial security.¹

The AMA encourages policymakers to work together to identify realistic coverage options and, in doing so, believes it is important for states to develop and test new Medicaid models that best meet the needs and priorities of low-income patients. While encouraging state flexibility, we emphasize the need for safeguards to protect low-income patients and emphatically support Medicaid's role as an indispensable safety net for the most vulnerable patients.

We are concerned that restrictive policies requiring certain enrollees to participate in mandatory community engagement hours, provisions commonly known as work requirements, jeopardize the health and welfare of Medicaid enrollees. The AMA opposes work requirements as a condition of Medicaid eligibility as we believe that such requirements will negatively affect access to care and lead to significant negative consequences on individuals' health and well-being. As physicians, we are especially concerned about interrupting the continuity of care for our patients who are subject to the requirements and expect

¹ Benjamin D. Sommers, Katherine Baicker & Arnold M. Epstein, Mortality and Access to Care among Adults after State Medicaid Expansions, 367 NEJM 11, 1025-34 (Sep. 2012); Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, What is Medicaid's Impact on Access to Care, Health Outcomes, and Quality of Care? Setting the Record Straight on the Evidence (Aug. 2013); Alisa Chester & Joan Alker, Georgetown University Health Policy Institute Center for Children and Families, Medicaid at 50: A Look at the Long-Term Benefits of Childhood Medicaid (Jul. 2015).

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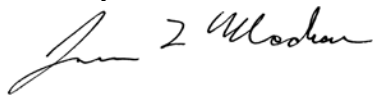
increased rates of churning in and out of the program. Employment status should not determine whether anyone receives the health care he or she needs.

That is why the AMA supports SB 290. This legislation would rightly eliminate community engagement requirements from the Medicaid program if more than 500 people are suspended or disenrolled for failing to comply. This is an important safeguard to protect against significant coverage losses.

We also support provisions in SB 290 to reinstate 90-day retroactive Medicaid eligibility for Medicaid applicants. Retroactive eligibility is a vital element of the Medicaid safety net, designed to protect vulnerable, low-income patients from further financial hardship and encourage them to seek care when needed, rather than risk exacerbating a health condition by delaying care. This important policy compensates for errors and delays that frequently occur during the Medicaid enrollment process and protects against cost-shifting to providers who would otherwise be forced to absorb the cost of unpaid medical bills incurred by patients who are otherwise eligible for assistance.

We thank you for the opportunity to express our views on this important legislation. If the AMA can be of assistance, please contact Annalia Michelman, JD, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at annalia.michelman@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4788.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James L. Madara".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Georgia A. Tuttle, MD
New Hampshire Medical Society