

**Vermont Medicaid and Exchange Advisory Committee
Department of Vermont Health Access
Agency of Human Services**

November 8, 2023

Commissioner Andrea De La Bruere
Department of Vermont Health Access
Agency of Human Services
280 State Drive
Waterbury, VT, 05671

Delivered by email

Dear Commissioner De La Bruere:

As the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) looks toward its Fiscal Year 2025 budget, the Medicaid and Exchange Advisory Committee (MEAC) would like to take this opportunity to share some thoughts about funding priorities within the Medicaid Program.

The MEAC represents a broad range of stakeholders, including Medicaid beneficiaries, and is charged with advising the Medicaid Agency Director on “health and medical care services” in fulfillment of a State Plan requirement (42 CFR Section 431.12). Our recommendations for budget priorities were discussed at the MEAC’s October 23rd meeting and are as follows.

The MEAC recommends that DVHA:

- Consult with the MEAC around the next iteration of health care reform initiatives, especially as it applies to funding and coordinating preventive and acute services in an equitable way for Medicaid enrollees.
- Ensures, in recognition of the substantial work involved in ending continuous enrollment and reestablishing redetermination processes, that the department is adequately resourced to meet the operational and service needs of the Vermonters who depend on it.
- Review the continuity of coverage and benefits for services and equipment necessary to maintain independence and quality of life when transitioning between Medicaid and exchange plans. This work may involve collaboration with the Department of Financial Regulation.
- Continue to take advantage of the Global Commitment to Health 1115 waiver for updating and improving Medicaid reimbursement and rates to sustain health care organizations and ensure competitive wages for individuals working in health care, including physical, vision, hearing, oral, long-term care, home and community-based, and mental health services covered under Medicaid. This focus on reimbursement rates should also address the personal care workers who are managed by recipients.
- Continue to improve and increase access to Medicaid services through:

- Evaluating the impact of recent dental rate increases on access to care for Medicaid enrollees and participation of dental providers in the Medicaid program.
- Evaluating and improving the effectiveness of the durable medical equipment program in meeting Medicaid enrollees' needs, including timely availability of equipment affecting quality of life and independence.
- Addressing affordability and access challenges for low-income Medicare beneficiaries.
- Ensuring communication with Medicaid enrollees supports meets Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and factors in language proficiency and cultural context.
- Re-evaluating the decision to halt coverage of over-the-counter (OTC) antihistamines, melatonin, and vitamin D and consider expanding coverage to other medically necessary OTC drugs frequently prescribed by providers.
- Explore and implement additional ways to invest in the workforce to ensure sustainability of services and Medicaid network adequacy.
- Prioritize budget investments in upstream care and interventions that:
 - Promote health equity for those who have been historically disadvantaged or marginalized, including but not limited to LGBTQ+, BIPOC, indigenous populations, those who have experienced adverse childhood events (ACEs), and people with disabilities.
 - Continue to develop and implement the Global Commitment to Health 1115 waiver supportive housing services pilot and promote safe housing options.
 - Increase access to nutritious food that meets medical and dietary needs.
- Support programs that avoid institutionalization without limiting institutional access.

The MEAC looks forward to working with you to ensure that these priorities inform the work of the Vermont Medicaid Program.

Yours Sincerely,



Mary Kate Mohlman
Co-Chair



Sharon Henault
Co-Chair

Vermont Medicaid and Exchange Advisory Committee

cc. Governor Phil Scott
Secretary Jenney Samuelson
Representative Jill Krowinski, Speaker of the House
Senator Phil Baruth, President Pro Tempore
Director Pat Jones
Commissioner Monica White
Commissioner Emily Hawes