



October 1, 2015

Ms. Vikki Wachino, Director
CMS Deputy Administrator and
Director, Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
7500 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850

Dear Director Wachino:

I am writing on behalf of Mackinac Straits Health System that serves a uniquely challenging rural health care landscape in the Eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan. On behalf of the patients we serve and the 300 dedicated physicians, nurses and staff who care for them, I urge you to approve the State of Michigan amendment to its Section 1115 Demonstration Program, known as the Healthy Michigan Plan (HMP).

The HMP is a model of success for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the opportunity to expand Medicaid. Since April 2014, the HMP has covered nearly 600,000 Michigan residents, the majority of whom were previously uninsured or unable to afford other coverage. Munson Healthcare alone provides services to 40,000 of these newly insured residents in Northern Lower Michigan. In addition to expanding care, the HMP has also resulted in a decreased rate of uncompensated care for our rural hospitals. As a result of the HMP, more residents of Northern Michigan now have care, expanding access to life saving diagnosis and treatments and vital healthcare delivery services at all Munson hospitals.

Therefore, Mackinac Straits Health System encourages you to approve the Department's Section 1115 Demonstration waiver amendment as soon as possible to ensure the continued success of Michigan's coverage expansion under the ACA. Doing so will ensure that 40,000 Northern Michigan residents and nearly 600,000 Michigan residents have access to critical healthcare services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney M. Nelson".

Rodney M. Nelson, President & CEO
Mackinac Straits Health System, Inc.

cc: The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Gary Peters, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Congressman Dr. Dan Benishek
The Honorable Congressman John Moolenaar