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October 2, 2015

As part of Ascension, the largest Catholic and nonprofit health system in the country with more than 150,000 associates and 40,000 employed and affiliated providers who serve in 1,900 sites of care – including 131 hospitals and more than 30 senior care facilities – in 24 states and the District of Columbia, Ascension Michigan (Borgess Health, Ascension Mid-Michigan, and St. John Providence) was an early supporter of the Affordable Care Act and its promise of healthcare coverage for millions of Americans. Ascension – Michigan’s mission mirrors Ascension’s commitment to serve all persons with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable. Last year Ascension Michigan provided nearly \$200 million in charity care to the poor.

When Michigan and other states were given an opportunity to expand their Medicaid programs, subsequent to a U.S. Supreme court ruling in late June of 2012, Ascension Michigan joined the Michigan Health and Hospital Association, other hospitals, and a variety of consumer stakeholders in Michigan to strongly advocate for the passage of Medicaid Expansion in our state. While the final program wasn’t our “ideal” version of what Medicaid Expansion might look like in Michigan, it did provide for a uniquely Michigan solution that balanced the interests of multiple constituencies and represented a pragmatic approach to the issue. As a result, **we support the State of Michigan’s amendment to its section 1115 Demonstration program known as the Healthy Michigan Plan (HMP) as submitted by the State in early September so that the 600,000 people in Michigan do not lose their HMP coverage.**

Ascension Michigan shares Ascension’s commitment to “Healthcare that Leaves No One Behind” and our hospitals and caregivers have experienced firsthand what health care coverage has meant to thousands of our patients who, many for the first time, have coverage thanks to the Healthy Michigan Plan. For example, many of our frontline associates and affiliated providers have experienced a patient’s relief on learning that they qualify for HMP coverage and can access healthcare services after having been uninsured for long periods of time. Additionally, there are numerous stories from throughout our health system of patients who have had medical conditions identified and who have begun a treatment plan to address these conditions as a result of HMP coverage, as well as stories of patients who have chronic conditions that have been brought under control as a result of more regular treatment visits versus the episodic care many received, prior to having HMP coverage.

As you know, approximately 600,000 people currently have HMP coverage in Michigan. According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, more than 455,000 people have had at least one primary care visit since the inception of the Healthy Michigan Plan. Another 174,179 have had preventative care visits and 52,000 mammograms and 27,000 colonoscopies have been performed. Our healthcare experience tells us that 1 in 100 mammography screens lead to early detection of breast cancer. This suggests that we may have been able to prevent around 500 cases more advanced and invasive breast cancer. Our experience with colonoscopies is similar.

Given that approximately one in 8 of all patients statewide use an Ascension Michigan hospital, our health systems and affiliated providers have seen a significant number of Healthy Michigan Plan enrollees. In fact, since the inception of the HMP Ascension-Michigan has facilitated the enrollment of over 15,000 individuals in the program through the efforts of financial counselors at each of our health systems. While we initially saw only a moderate number of these individuals access preventative screenings in the first ten months of coverage, we have seen a marked increase in the number of mammography and colonoscopy screenings that are being performed throughout our health system in the ensuing 7 months of the program's existence. Through the end of August approximately 3,000 mammography screenings and almost 1,300 colonoscopy screenings have been performed at an Ascension Michigan site.

While we recognize that the cost sharing requirement included in this waiver is not insignificant for the affected population (individuals remaining in the program after 48 months of cumulative eligibility and who have an income level between 100% and 133% of the Federal Poverty level) we are committed to ensuring our patients participate in activities that can reduce out of pocket expenses. As you know, under the program the maximum out of pocket expenses of 7% of annual income can be significantly reduced if the beneficiary participates in healthy behavior activities outlined in the Plan. At the same time, we will monitor and track whether these new cost sharing requirements are in any way limiting access to necessary care.

On behalf of Ascension Michigan and the patients and communities our hospitals and affiliated physicians serve, **I urge you to approve the State of Michigan's amendment to its Section 1115 Demonstration program.** Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this, or any other issue.

Sincerely,



Gwen MacKenzie

Senior Vice President, Ascension Health & Market Executive, Michigan