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October 1, 2015

Victoria Wachino, Director
Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue Southwest
Washington, DC 20201

RE: Healthier Washington Initiative's 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver Application

Dear Director Wachino:

On behalf of the King County Housing Authority (KCHA), I am writing to express our strong support for the Supportive Housing Medicaid benefit proposed in Washington State's 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver application to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The proposed supportive housing benefit would help ensure that providers in our state have the financial resources to fund supportive housing services for chronically homeless individuals. People who are chronically homeless and/or who have serious disabilities experience significant health disparities, including high rates of chronic and acute behavioral and physical illnesses, risk of injury, trauma, and exposure from living outside, and barriers to accessing uninterrupted, appropriate levels of health care. As a result, this population also has high costs to public systems, including health care, due to frequent emergency department utilization, hospitalizations, and high utilization of other public crisis services. A strong body of local and national evidence has demonstrated that supportive housing is effective in helping people who are chronically homeless access and retain permanent housing, while saving public health systems like Medicaid millions of dollars per year.

At KCHA, we recognize the importance of supportive housing services in helping to improve the lives of chronically homeless individuals. We work with local service providers, including Sound Mental Health, Valley Cities, and Navos, to provide supportive services to our region's neediest individuals. A supportive housing benefit would provide funding to help these organizations deliver individualized housing services and tenancy sustaining services to more individuals across our state.

Thank you for your consideration of Washington's 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver application. If approved, this proposal will result in significant savings to Medicaid while ensuring people with serious disabilities are able to live with security, autonomy and dignity in their own communities.

Sincerely,


Stephen Norman
Executive Director

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