

August 25, 2011

Cindy Mann, Director
Center for Medicaid and State Operations
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
United States Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Re: NCPA Opposition to Florida 1115 Waiver Application

Dear Director Mann:

On behalf of the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA), I am writing to express our strong opposition to the modified "Section 1115" Medicaid Research and Demonstration Waiver recently submitted by the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). The Florida Legislature's passage of House Bills 7107 and 7109 calling for the implementation of a new statewide "experiment" in Medicaid managed care required AHCA to submit its amended waiver proposal to CMS by August 1, 2011. In addition, the State of Florida has requested CMS renew the 2006 waiver in the five pilot counties. NCPA represents America's independent community pharmacists, including the owners of more than 23,000 community pharmacies, pharmacy franchises and chains. Our members employ over 300,000 full-time employees and dispense nearly half of our nation's retail prescription medicines.

NCPA has very serious concerns about the Section 1115 waiver proposal and the extension of the state's current Medicaid pilot program due to the troubling history of problems that have plagued the pilot program for the past five years. The recently passed state legislation would essentially expand Medicaid managed care to all 67 counties and almost all groups of recipients by 2014. A recent Georgetown University Health Policy Institute study¹ of Florida's existing Medicaid managed care pilot program highlighted the fact that there is currently insufficient evidence to verify claims of potential cost savings and also there are very serious concerns with regard to patient access to care, particularly with turnover among private plans that disrupt sustainable patient-provider relationships.

¹ hpi.georgetown.edu/floridamedicaid

The newly passed Florida legislation attempts to build upon a failed managed care platform, vastly expands its scope and would grant managed care plans unprecedented flexibility to vary the amount, duration and scope of benefits to beneficiaries. The expansion of this program is being proposed without any attempt to remedy the market instability and plan turnover concerns that have characterized the five-county pilot program to date. This presents grave concerns particularly for children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable populations who are solely dependent on these state services.

While NCPA is sympathetic to the plight of states that are struggling to balance their budgets and continue to provide critical services for residents, turning the care of virtually all of the state's Medicaid population over to for-profit entities that have not to date demonstrated any discernable savings to the state and have hindered patient access to care seems to run counter to the essential purpose of the Medicaid program in general. As a first line strategy, NCPA actively advocates for increased state partnership with the Medicaid provider community as a strategy to find cost saving solutions that do not jeopardize patient care.

From a pharmacist perspective, NCPA believes that community pharmacy providers can play an even more active role in averting downstream medical interventions while securing even greater cost savings to the state through increased generic utilization, promoting optimal medication therapy and adherence supported by face-to-face pharmacist interaction. Pharmacists practicing with other healthcare providers enhance patient coordination of care and can prevent hospital readmissions.

In conclusion, given the breadth and depth of the above referenced concerns with the legislation, we respectfully request that you reject the State of Florida's 1115 Waiver application on the grounds that it is deficient and unresponsive to a host of previously identified problems. We appreciate the opportunity to present our concerns on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Pilch".

Susan Pilch, J.D.

Senior Director, Policy and Regulatory Affairs