



November 29, 2022

The Honorable Bryan Steil
1526 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Pocan
1727 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Kind
1502 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gwen Moore
2252 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald
1507 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Glenn Grothman
1427 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Tiffany
1719 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Gallagher
1230 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation,

On behalf of Children's Wisconsin, I urge you to prioritize the issues outlined below and take action yet this year on policies to improve the health and well-being of children.

As you know, Children's Wisconsin providers and staff are on the frontlines of addressing some of the most pressing issues impacting children. Like our peers across the country, we have been adapting our specialized hospital and clinical pediatric services to care for a record number of infants and young children with respiratory illnesses, including respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and flu. We continue to work with our community partners to respond to the overwhelming need for kids' mental and behavioral health care services in the state. Amongst these priorities, we're committed to addressing social determinants of health and increasing kids' access to the care and services they need.

There are a number of bipartisan, bicameral policies that would help us and other community providers respond to these and other urgent pediatric health issues to ensure that kids in the state have access to the care and supports that are vital to keep them healthy, well and thriving.

Specifically we ask for your support for policies that would:

Make investments to address the children's mental health emergency

Children and adolescents in Wisconsin and across the nation are facing a mental and behavioral health crisis that existed prior to the pandemic and has worsened due to the added stress of the last two years. According to Wisconsin's Office of Children's Mental Health, one in five Wisconsin children have a diagnosable mental illness and approximately 40 percent of them are not accessing treatment.

We appreciate Congress' attention to addressing this issue and ask that any comprehensive legislation advanced at the end of the year include tailored and dedicated support for children's mental and behavioral health. This includes policies that would: bolster prevention services and community-based systems of pediatric mental health care (*H.R.7944, Helping Kids Cope Act & S. 4472 Health Care Capacity for Pediatric Mental Health Act*); provide enhanced Medicaid reimbursement for children's mental health (*S. 4747, Investing in Kids' Mental Health Now Act*); and authorize workforce grants specifically for pediatrics to support the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce across pediatric behavioral health professional fields, including both clinical and non-clinical roles (*H.R.7944/S.4472*).

Bolster support for the pediatric mental health workforce

The Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education program (CHGME) supports the training of more than half of the nation's pediatric physician workforce and is essential to continued access to the pediatric specialists kids need, including doctors who care for children in mental health crisis, treat complex pediatric medical conditions and respond to viral surges, including RSV. Yet, unlike other federal investments in physician training for those caring for adults, there is a growing shortfall in the level of support for pediatric training in children's hospitals that must be addressed. We urge you to provide robust fiscal year 2023 funding for CHGME to reduce the longstanding and growing gap between federal investments for physicians training in adult care versus children's care.

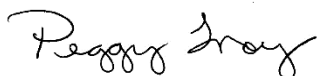
Safeguard child and maternal health coverage and access to critical social supports

As you know, Medicaid & the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is a vital source of coverage for kids in the state and covers more than one-third of births. At Children's, approximately 53% of our patients are covered by Medicaid, including many with some of the most complex conditions. We strongly support policies to strengthen Medicaid and CHIP coverage by providing 12 months continuous eligibility for children and 12 months postpartum coverage. Coverage gaps due to minor temporary fluctuations in household income or simple paperwork errors can have a real and deleterious effect on children's access to care. Additionally, having consistent, reliable access to health care helps ensure a mother can get the physical, mental and emotional health care supports she needs to ensure she and her baby are healthy and thriving. Children's also urges you to advance a permanent authorization of CHIP, which is a vital source of funding for children enrolled in BadgerCare.

Children's also strongly supports passage of the Jackie Walorski Maternal and Child Home Visiting Reauthorization Act (H.R. 8876). As you know, MIECHV provides federal funding for evidence-based home visiting programs. It is an important source of funding for Wisconsin's Family Foundations Home Visiting program which distributes more than \$10 million a year to entities throughout the state, including Children's, to provide pregnant women, children and families with voluntary, in-home supports and mentoring through their children's first years of life. Home visiting is a low cost, sustainable prevention measure which helps reduce the risk of child maltreatment, strengthen family functioning, connection to community resources, and promote healthy child development. This bill would provide long-term certainty through the five-year reauthorization, as well as increase funding for the program, which will help ensure that states and programs can continue serving kids and families in Wisconsin and across the nation.

I strongly encourage your support of these policies and ask you to prioritize these issues as we near the end of the year. Providers at Children's have been doing all they can to meet kids' needs and we ask for your partnership to invest in these critical areas to make a difference for the kids in Wisconsin. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Peggy Troy
President & CEO
Children's Wisconsin