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July 28, 2021

Submitted electronically via email.

The Honorable John Lawn, Chair
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
State House, Room 447
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Cindy Friedman, Chair
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
State House, Room 208
Boston, MA 02133

RE: H. 1309/S. 762, An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children and H. 1310/S. 763, An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities

Dear Chair Lawn and Chair Friedman:

The Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals, on behalf of our 12 member hospitals, appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children (H. 1309/S. 762) and An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities (H. 1310/S. 763).

As teaching hospitals, our members serve the needs of the Commonwealth's most medically complex patients, including its children. As you know, Massachusetts is a national leader in providing access to health care for children, but unfortunately, significant gaps remain for immigrant children. While these children often have access to coverage like Health Safety Net or MassHealth Limited, these safety net programs have strict limitations that severely limit access to comprehensive coverage. The legislation referenced above would provide access to comprehensive MassHealth coverage to children, or children with disabilities, who are only excluded from that coverage solely due to their immigration status.

It is estimated that in Massachusetts, 30,000 young adults, including 1,650 young people with disabilities, do not have access to comprehensive health insurance coverage due to their immigration status. Lack of health insurance coverage only contributes to the many challenges that immigrant families face, from socioeconomic hardship to language barriers. We believe the Commonwealth would be well-served to ensure all immigrant children, and in particular all children with disabilities, have access to all the health care services they need via the MassHealth program. Doing so would advance the health equity goals of the Commonwealth and improve the long-term health outcomes of our immigrant residents.

We note that other jurisdictions, including California, Washington, Oregon, Illinois, New York, and Washington, D.C. already provide Medicaid coverage to children regardless of immigration status. We urge the legislature take the steps necessary to ensure all children in the Commonwealth have access to comprehensive health insurance coverage.

We respectfully ask you to support and favorably report both An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children (H. 1309/S. 762) and An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities (H. 1310/S. 763). Please do not hesitate to be in touch with any questions or if we can provide additional information, and we appreciate your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia McMullin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "M".

Patricia McMullin
Executive Director
Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals