



December 17, 2021

Dear Governor Pritzker and Illinois State Budget Leaders,

The undersigned organizations work on behalf of the 900,000 uninsured residents in our state, most of whom are low-to middle-income individuals and families eligible right now for healthcare coverage through Medicaid and Marketplace coverage. We write today to **respectfully request inclusion of \$40 million in the State of Illinois' FY 2023 budget for the reinstatement of an Illinois community-based enrollment assister program.**

While the uninsured rate in Illinois has decreased since the Affordable Care Act was implemented in Illinois, we still have an unacceptable uninsured rate of 8.7%, with low-income Black, Latinx and other people of color having disproportionately higher rates. **The April 2021 [Illinois Affordability and Feasibility Study](#) (hereinafter “the Affordability Study”) indicates that more than two-thirds of the uninsured population in Illinois are eligible for but unenrolled in existing free or federally- subsidized coverage, including 9 out of 10 uninsured Black Illinoisans.** With the addition of the premium tax credit enhancements under the American Rescue Plan ACT (ARPA) and COVID-19 impacts on unemployment, even more Illinois residents are eligible for low-cost Marketplace plans or Medicaid. However, the fact remains that too many people do not know about these available health care coverage options or simply think that these options do not apply to them. As the Affordability Study states, “Lack of information about coverage options and the availability of financial assistance continues to be barriers to enrollment. In 2020, about two-thirds of consumers likely to use the Marketplace or Medicaid were unsure whether the ACA was still the law.”

**Of all of the potential policy solutions considered in the Affordability Study, the analysis showed that funding community-based individual enrollment assistance provides the largest reduction in the uninsured rate, especially for Black, Latinx and other people of color.** As the Affordability Study states, “Consumer assisters, if adequately resourced, can play a critical role in facilitating enrollment particularly as they are often trusted individuals within their communities and can effectively communicate with uninsured individuals about the value of health insurance and coverage.”

We know that this program works in Illinois – because we had a successful \$35 Million In Person Counselor program plus Navigator program from 2013 - 16. The IPC program ended in 2016 and while Illinois currently receives over \$4 million in federal funds for a Navigator program (employing over 100 individuals across the state), this isn't nearly enough to meet the need.

We strongly support the addition of \$40 million in funding in the FY23 budget to reinstate the enrollment assister program in Illinois whether through the structure of the prior In-Person Counselor program or through another program. In addition to having the highest potential to reduce the uninsured rate, such a program would have the additional benefit of preventing Medicaid churn for eligible individuals once the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ends.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us to discuss this further: Rudi Hancock, Government Relations Liaison, Shriver Center on Poverty Law ([rudihancock@povertylaw.org](mailto:rudihancock@povertylaw.org) or (312) 848-2591); Kelsie Landers, Senior Manager of Health Policy, Heartland Alliance ([klanders@heartlandalliance.org](mailto:klanders@heartlandalliance.org) or (630) 408-2948); Timothy Jackson, Director of Government Relations, AIDS Foundation Chicago ([tjackson@aidschicago.org](mailto:tjackson@aidschicago.org) or (256) 200-8878); Shana Crews, Government Relations Director, Illinois & Iowa, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Inc. ([shana.crews@cancer.org](mailto:shana.crews@cancer.org) or (309) 645-6909); and Corbin McGhee, Senior Manager, Advocacy, National MS Society ([corbin.mcghee@nmss.org](mailto:corbin.mcghee@nmss.org) or (630) 470-2875).

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

**Protect Our Care Illinois (POCIL) Members [in formation]**

AIDS Foundation Chicago

ACA Consumer Advocacy

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Inc.

Aunt Martha's Health & Wellness

Champaign County Health Care Consumers

Enlace Chicago

Health & Medicine Policy Research Group

Heartland Alliance

Illinois Primary Health Care Association

Legal Council for Health Justice

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

National MS Society

Shriver Center on Poverty Law

Small Business Majority