



December 10, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leaders McConnell and Schumer; Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We write to you today to urge you to pass a permanent extension of the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program. We also urge you to make permanent the spousal impoverishment protections for recipients of Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS). Thanks to Senate Finance Committee Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Wyden, these provisions have been included as part of the revised Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act, as released on December 6, 2019.

United Spinal Association is the largest non-profit organization, founded by paralyzed veterans, dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of all people living with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D), including veterans, and providing support and information to loved ones, care providers and professionals. United Spinal has over 70 years of experience educating and empowering over 2 million individuals with SCI/D to achieve and maintain the highest levels of independence, health and personal fulfillment. United Spinal has over 55,000 members, 52 chapters, close to 200 support groups and more than 100 rehabilitation facilities and hospital partners nationwide, including 10 distinguished Spinal Cord Injury Model System Centers that support innovative projects and research in the field of SCI. United Spinal Association is also a VA-accredited veterans service organization (VSO) serving veterans with disabilities of all kinds.

Since the MFP program was initiated in 2005, it has helped more than 91,000 people with disabilities transition out of institutional care and return to living in the community. In so doing, it has helped to incentivize states to cover HCBS through their Medicaid programs. Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have participated in the MFP program, which has shown both improvements in the quality of living and substantial cost savings. Making the MFP program permanent would be a bold and important step towards demonstrating the commitment of the United States towards deinstitutionalization and a recognition of the right of all Americans to live in the community.

Medicaid's spousal impoverishment protections allow an individual to remain eligible for Medicaid long-term services and supports (LTSS) while that individual's spouse maintains his/her income and assets. These protections have been in place since 1988 for Medicaid LTSS beneficiaries who received care in an institutional setting such as a nursing home, and since 2014, all states have extended these protections to Medicaid LTSS beneficiaries who receive care at home through HCBS. A permanent extension of this policy for Medicaid HCBS beneficiaries would ensure that these individuals will no longer have to worry that a potential expiration of these protections would force them out of their homes

and into nursing homes in order to maintain their Medicaid eligibility and to continue receiving the care that they need.

On behalf of our members and all Americans with disabilities, we ask that Congress work swiftly to enact a permanent extension of the MFP program and Medicaid HCBS spousal impoverishment protections by the end of calendar year 2019. It is critical that these provisions are signed into law by then, as these provisions are set to expire per the Sustaining Excellence in Medicaid Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-39).

Thank you for considering these comments. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Steve Lieberman, Director, Policy & Advocacy, at slieberman@unitedspinal.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alexandra Bennewith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alexandra Bennewith, MPA
Vice President, Government Relations
United Spinal Association