



Testimony of Jan Kief, MD, President

Colorado Medical Society

On SB13-200 by Senator Irene Aguilar, MD

Medicaid Expansion

March 14, 2013

Thank you Madame Chair. For the record, my name is Dr. Jan Kief and I appear before you today as President of the 7,700 member Colorado Medical Society.

Colorado has an historic opportunity to close the health care coverage gap and to reform Medicaid, the federal-state system that provides health care for lower-income Coloradans. At this point, it's settled that the federal Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, take your pick, is the law of the land and, because it's here to stay, we have decided to work within its framework to ensure it delivers on its promises for the people of Colorado.

CMS is committed to collaborating with Gov. John Hickenlooper, the Colorado Legislature and all stakeholders to help get this right and benefit the people of Colorado.

While we strongly support SB13-200 and Gov. Hickenlooper's plan to expand Medicaid eligibility – we are fully aware that this legislation is only half of the battle. We must also ensure that there is a provider network in place to assure that these newly covered Coloradans have access to care. Providing more Coloradans benefit cards only has meaning if they are able to use them to see the providers they need. This is why the overarching goal of CMS is to work with the Legislature, the Hickenlooper administration and all stakeholders to make the Medicaid health care delivery system work so that increased coverage is supported by adequate access to care, high quality, and reduced costs.

Colorado's landmark Senate Bill 208 Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Reform concluded in 2008 that "efforts to expand enrollment in public programs must be preceded by efforts to improve efficiency and increase provider participation in those programs." This is why we strongly support the Hickenlooper Administration as it operationalizes the vision to transform Medicaid into a high performing delivery system through the Accountable Care Collaborative Program.

The ACC Program is composed of seven Regional Care Collaboratives and they are reshaping Medicaid through local empowerment and an unprecedented collaboration with the state. The ACC Program is increasing value, improving the care experience for patients and saving money.

Reforming the Medicaid delivery system so the taxpayers get a better return on the dollars spent is really hard work. Over the course of a weekend just last month, CMS hosted a facilitation that included the seven RCCO Program medical directors, practicing physicians, and RCCO Program operational staff. We learned that many good things are happening and that other things simply need more attention. The main takeaway of the weekend facilitation was the commitment of the physicians and operations personnel to make the ACCO Program successful.

CMS President is an elective office, like yours, so I understand what its like to be responsive and responsible to a constituency. We are very aware that not everyone agrees that Colorado should opt into the Medicaid Expansion. This is true within my own constituency. In a survey of our members in August of 2012, we found that 60 percent of our members support the expansion, 30 percent opposed it, and 10 percent were unsure. Because the Expansion is about much more than providing more coverage, we went back into the field with another survey in December 2012, and asked our members if they thought CMS would be on the right or wrong track if we supported the expansion “while we also work to reform the Medicaid delivery system.” Slightly over 75 percent of respondents stated that this approach would be on the “right track,” with 8 percent “unsure” and 12 percent stating “wrong track.”

Based on this consensus, our plan to ensure that expanded coverage, expanded access, improved quality, and lower cost go hand in hand includes these pillars:

- Steadfast support for the Accountable Care Collaborative Program.
- Reform Medicaid reimbursement system to provide equitable rates for all physicians by moving away from simply paying fees for a menu of services to rewarding value in the form of care that improves patients’ health.
- Preserve and innovate Colorado’s current stable medical liability environment. Threats to Colorado’s stable environment can shift costs to providers, drive unnecessary tests and harm access at the same time the state is asking physicians to accept more Medicaid patients.
- Streamline Medicaid processes to reduce the administrative burdens within the system.
- Increase and maximize patient engagement to facilitate health literacy, healthy behaviors and reduce the avoidable use of high cost services.
- Provide continuous eligibility to all eligible children throughout the state.

Through this body’s decision to expand Medicaid, our state will create almost 22,000 jobs, including over 14,000 over the first 18 months, serve our most vulnerable populations, and achieve a milestone in covering an additional 160,000 uninsured Coloradans. This will be the single most important piece of legislation to pass during this general assembly.

The Affordable Care Act is settled law. It placed two of the major coverage provisions squarely into your lap – the Health Insurance Exchange and the Medicaid Expansion. Colorado Medical Society has chosen to work within the law to achieve our long-standing goal of coverage and access to high quality, cost effective care for all Coloradans.