July 30, 2019

Governor Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Cc: Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan, Commissioner Jan Malcolm, Acting Commissioner Pam Wheelock

Dear Governor Walz:

This Is Medicaid writes today regarding the Blue Ribbon Commission on Health and Human Services (the Commission) created during the final negotiations of the 2019 legislative session. This Is Medicaid is a coalition of more than 50 nonpartisan organizations, including hospitals, advocacy organizations, services for seniors and people with disabilities and other health care providers, representing the 1.2 million Minnesotans who access Medical Assistance (MA) for their healthcare.

Our coalition does not oppose the general idea of a Commission looking into the Health and Human Services Budget, but we do have questions about the Commission’s stated purpose, and some of the rhetoric surrounding health and human services in our state. The fact that Medicaid represents a large and growing part of the HHS budget gives us great concern about the potential cost savings the Commission might pursue and the impacts of those savings on Minnesotans who rely on MA for their care. We also have apprehensions about the claims of waste, fraud, and abuse that continue to be directed at HHS, and whether those claims will be exploited in this venue to the detriment of our neighbors who legitimately count on MA for support. While rooting out inefficiencies in the system is essential, we hope that these claims will not be overstated and distract from other avenues toward improvement and savings.

Your administration has been a strong advocate for protecting essential funding for MA, this Commission will be yet another venue where your leadership on this issue will be essential. This Is Medicaid agrees that HHS spending growth is an important consideration as we develop plans to ensure that Minnesotans continue to receive the coverage and care they need. However, we also recognize that spending growth is due in large part to growth in need for services, especially as it relates to populations with higher average costs such as older adults.
and people with disabilities. The Commission will need to take great care to ensure that its work does not cause harm at a time when demand for core services is on the rise.

We need a thoughtful, deliberative, and sustained process if we are to identify strategies to handle the growing cost of care. *This Is Medicaid* implores you to ensure that this process is as open and transparent as possible. The Commission must be accountable to the millions of Minnesotans who rely on HHS services, who can understand where and why the Committee is recommending any changes at the end of their tenure.

*This Is Medicaid* believes that the Commission has the potential to be a highly productive and beneficial pursuit. We look forward to the appointment of Committee members who will work collaboratively and openly with the public to deliver ambitious and constructive proposals not only for the good of Minnesota’s bottom line, but for the good of our communities and our most vulnerable neighbors.

Sincerely,

*This Is Medicaid*