Good morning,

I am the Executive Director of the Family Healthcare Foundation. The Family Healthcare Foundation is a Tampa Bay nonprofit that promotes equitable access to healthcare for individuals, children, and families through application assistance for public health programs (CHIP, ACA, etc), outreach, and coalition building.

I am submitting public comment on behalf of the Family Healthcare Foundation in response to the request for comments published on September 21, 2021.

* In regards to the shortages of providers specializing in children’s behavioral health care, we recognize Pediatric Specialities are severely understaffed. Incentivizing new providers such as expanding the National Health Service Corps student loan forgiveness program eligibility criteria to include metropolitan and non-rural designated areas may incentivize those considering a career as pediatric mental health and behavioral health providers.
* In regards to non-clinical professional recommendations, Healthcare Navigators and community health workers are a powerful workforce that have the opportunity to provide on-going medical case management services to connect children to care. Through the Family Health Care Foundation’s Connecting Children to CARE program, funded by the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County, we assist families with healthcare program applications (Medicaid, CHIP, ACA, etc), and then follow a subset of those children to assist them with making appointments and reminders to attend well-child visits. This program had a 91% success rate during our last evaluation period for compliance with attending visits (2020-2021). Identifying specialists, troubleshooting insurance complications, and scheduling appointments have been some of the top barriers that the Healthcare Navigators have assisted families overcome. Expanding support to non-clinical professionals to ensure access to healthcare is vital to medical care utilization. In addition, expanding school-based psychological services may have prevent crisis behavioral health occurrences, and provide behavioral health needs in the locations where children spend much of their time.
* Care integration for children in the State of Florida is uniquely siloed for CHIP recipients. Streamlining CHIP to be handled by one state agency (instead of four) could result in faster eligibility determination, and potentially faster reimbursement of providers.

Thank you for reviewing these comments.

Best,

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| **Katie Roders Turner** **Executive Director** |