

An open letter to Governor Murphy from Lakewood Pediatricians

November 19, 2020

The Honorable Phil Murphy

Governor of New Jersey

Office of the Governor

PO Box 001

Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

We're reaching out to you on behalf of children from low income families in Lakewood Township and throughout the State of New Jersey.

It has come to our attention that United Healthcare Community Plan, an NJ FamilyCare HMO, has recently terminated its longstanding agreement with The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). This is the last HMO to terminate its agreement with CHOP, following all the other HMOs, effectively blocking tens of thousands of children who are on NJ FamilyCare from accessing this world-renowned tertiary center, which is the largest pediatric health care provider in the State of New Jersey.

As seasoned pediatricians, we are familiar with the pediatric hospitals within the state of New Jersey and have successfully collaborated with them to serve many of our patients over the years. We have utmost respect for them and their medical expertise and can personally testify that these hospitals provide excellent medical care to thousands of children annually.

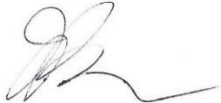
At the same time, we have all cared for children with complex medical conditions who relied on the multiple specialties at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for medical care. These children would have been unable to get adequate medical care at our regional hospitals; CHOP's main campus or the multiple CHOP outpatient satellites across New Jersey were their only option. It is not an exaggeration to say that utilizing CHOP's advanced care versus other local or regional hospitals has often made the difference between life and death.

As pediatricians who are deeply committed to the welfare of the young in our community, we are deeply concerned by this lack of access to CHOP for children of low-income families. We are aware that HMOs claim that they offer single case agreements, but from our experience, these agreements are extremely hard to obtain. In the small number of cases where single case agreements are provided, obtaining them takes a long time, and there is usually no time to waste when it comes to complex, life-threatening diagnoses.

We cannot in good conscience allow this disparity of medical care based on income, with children from families who can afford private insurance having access to appropriate medical care while disadvantaged children are denied life-saving care.

We urge you to rectify this inequality by mandating NJ FamilyCare HMOs to provide access to CHOP, so that all children in Lakewood Township and across the State of New Jersey can have access to the medical care they need in a timely fashion, regardless of income.

Sincerely,



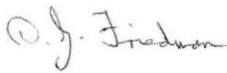
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