



February 1, 2021

Governor Kay Ivey  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol  
600 Dexter Avenue  
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear Governor Ivey:

On behalf of those living with cystic fibrosis (CF) in Alabama, we thank you for all that you and the state of Alabama are doing to ensure the health and safety of state residents in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we understand that these are unprecedented times, adequate funding for Medicaid is more important than ever for people living with CF and the providers who treat them. We urge you to preserve funding for Alabama Medicaid in the FY 2022 budget and reject any proposed reductions to eligibility or benefits.

#### **About Cystic Fibrosis & the CF Foundation**

Cystic fibrosis is a life-threatening genetic disease that affects 30,000 children and adults in the United States, including 410 in Alabama. CF causes the body to produce thick, sticky mucus that clogs the lungs and digestive system, which can lead to life-threatening infections. While great strides have been made in the treatment of the disease, the lives of young people with cystic fibrosis are still cut far too short; half of young adults with this disease still die before age 30.

The mission of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation is to cure cystic fibrosis and to provide all people with CF the opportunity to lead long, fulfilling lives by funding research and drug development, partnering with the CF community, and advancing high-quality, specialized care. The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation accredits the more than 130 care centers in the United States—including 2 programs in Alabama—and supports the development of CF clinical practice guidelines. Because cystic fibrosis requires targeted, specialized care and treatment, most people with CF receive care at one of these accredited CF care centers, which provide multidisciplinary care in accordance with systematically reviewed, data-driven clinical practice guidelines.

#### **Alabama Medicaid Agency**

Medicaid is a crucial source of coverage for people living with CF and we urge you to ensure the FY 2022 preserves existing Medicaid funding, eligibility, and benefits. Nearly half of children and a quarter of adults with CF in Alabama depend on the program for some or all of their health care coverage. Medicaid plays an important role in helping patients afford the specialized care and treatments they need to stay healthy—for many people with cystic fibrosis, it fills coverage gaps left by private insurance that would otherwise leave patients with unmanageable out-of-pocket costs. For people with cystic fibrosis, adequate coverage is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Without access to expert CF care and treatments, the risk of lung exacerbations, irreversible lung damage, costly hospitalizations, and decreased quality of life increases drastically.

Cystic fibrosis care and treatment is expensive, even for those with comprehensive coverage, and reducing

funding for Medicaid could disrupt access to care for vulnerable Alabamians at a time when they can least afford it. According to a survey conducted by George Washington University of over 1,800 people living with CF and their families, over 70 percent indicated that paying for health care has caused financial problems such as being contacted by a collection agency, having to file for bankruptcy, experiencing difficulties paying for basics like rent and utilities, or having to take a second job to make ends meet. The same study found that nearly half of people with CF delayed or skipped treatment in the preceding year due to cost. Medicaid helps to ease the cost burden of care for the 410 people in Alabama with CF who rely on the program for some or all of their health care coverage.

Additionally, we are concerned that cuts to Medicaid will further stress hospitals and providers already in a weakened financial state. CF care centers are often housed within academic medical centers, which serve a disproportionate number of low-income patients. These medical centers rely on Medicaid reimbursement for a large portion of their revenue and many are already in financially precarious positions due to reduced volume in certain procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some CF care centers have been forced to furlough or lay off staff; additional cuts to provider reimbursement could further exacerbate these issues and result in centers losing critical staff.

### **Policy Recommendation**

We understand that Alabama is facing budget constraints as it continues to address the economic and public health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we urge you to protect people with CF and preserve Alabama Medicaid funding in the upcoming FY 2022 and any potential forthcoming budget adjustments.

We stand ready to serve as a resource as you address the current public health emergency. If you have any questions about CF or would like to discuss this request further, please contact Adam Kellerman, State Policy Specialist, at [akellermann@cff.org](mailto:akellermann@cff.org) or (240) 200-3713.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



**Mary B. Dwight**

Senior VP of Policy & Advocacy  
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

CC: Scott Harris, MD, MPH, FACP, FIDSA, State Health Officer, Alabama Public Health  
Stephanie Azar, Commissioner, Alabama Medicaid Agency