

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Health Care Finance



Office of the Director

June 3, 2019

Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Re: District of Columbia Proposed Section 1115 Behavioral Health Transformation Demonstration

Dear Administrator Verma:

On behalf of the residents of the District of Columbia, I am pleased to submit to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services the enclosed Section 1115 Medicaid demonstration application for approval.

The District, like many other states in the nation, has experienced an alarming increase in the number of opioid-related overdose deaths among residents over the past five years. Though the District has undertaken numerous efforts to halt overdose deaths and provide residents with meaningful access to behavioral health services, the District can add significant/substantial value to this approach by addressing gaps in Medicaid's coverage of essential behavioral health services.

The proposed demonstration will allow the District to use Medicaid funding to reimburse institutions for mental diseases (IMDs) for inpatient, residential, and other treatment provided to Medicaid-eligible adults with substance use disorders and serious mental illness. Additionally, the proposed demonstration will promote improved access to a broader range of community-based behavioral health services, help the District fight the epidemic of deaths associated with opioid use disorder, and aid the District's efforts to transform Medicaid's behavioral health service delivery system.

In submitting this demonstration application, the District aims to follow CMS guidance to enable states to better serve individuals with serious mental illness, serious emotional disturbance, and substance use disorder through a waiver of Medicaid's historic prohibition of coverage for IMD services. The District is appreciative of your leadership to support states in testing the viability of this service delivery model as part of a continuum of care to improve the lives of residents with serious behavioral health needs. This waiver is an important first step in supporting District residents on their path to recovery and better health outcomes.

My team benefitted greatly from the timely assistance and expertise that CMS provided to help expedite the proposed demonstration development and submission. With the support of our federal partners at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), we look forward to working together to implement meaningful behavioral health reforms for the District.

Letter to Administrator Verma
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If you have any questions regarding the demonstration, please contact either Melisa Byrd, State Medicaid Director and Senior Deputy Director, Department of Health Care Finance at (202) 442-9075 or melisa.byrd@dc.gov or Alice Weiss, Director, Health Care Policy and Research Administration, Department of Health Care Finance at (202) 442-9107 or alice.weiss@dc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Turnage". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Wayne Turnage
Deputy Mayor, Health and Human Services, District of Columbia
Director, District of Columbia Department of Health Care Finance

Cc: Sabrina Tillman-Boyd
Frankeena Wright
Adam Goldman
Jack Nocito
Tonya Moore
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