



March 23, 2020

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of the State of Washington
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Cascade Care Public Option Plans Request For Application (RFA) - Postponement Request

Dear Governor Inslee,

This letter is on behalf of the Association of Washington Health Plans (AWHP), Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA), and Washington State Medical Association (WSMA). Collectively we represent over 100 hospitals, more than 11,000 physicians, and 12 health plans covering 7 million Washington families and individuals.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is one of the greatest challenges our health care system has ever seen. Given the unprecedented nature of the Coronavirus pandemic and the response it requires, we urge you to postpone the RFA for the Cascade Care Public Option with a goal to implement the program January 1, 2022. Hospitals and physicians are focused around the clock on serving their communities and ensuring the health and safety of their patients. Treating those impacted by the virus while ensuring care continues for urgent patient needs has become the highest priority for all. While our organizations are committed to supporting a successful Public Option launch, our ability to do so is compromised in the current climate.

Health plans have responded in good faith to the Health Care Authority's RFA and will continue to support the Cascade Care Public Option Plans, as it represents a laudable goal of providing all Washington residents access to cost-effective, high-quality health care. However, to produce RFA responses and build networks to support Public Option amongst the insurmountable challenges of the pandemic jeopardizes the ability of the Public Option to be successful. Consumers will still have a robust menu of health plans from which to choose for 2021, including those featuring the new standard benefit plan design also included as part of the Cascade Care legislation.

Hospitals, providers and health plans play a critical role in our state's response to the virus. The health care delivery system in Washington state is at a crisis point as result of the COVID-19 outbreak. We support the moves you have made to curtail non-emergent (elective) procedures, close schools and encourage social distancing. However, these changes are hitting hospitals hard. The cancelation of elected procedures combined with significant declines in outpatient services have left many hospitals and physician practices reeling financially.

We appreciate the tremendous effort that has gone into the procurement process thus far. However, as we all work to combat the challenges in front of us, we continue to put 100 percent of our effort and available resources into responding to the pandemic and caring for our patients and members.

For these reasons, we ask that you postpone the RFA process until the virus' impacts are better understood, and we can launch a successful Cascade Care Public Option Plan in 2022.

Sincerely,

Association of Washington Healthcare Plans (AWHP)

Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA)

Washington State Medical Association (WSMA)

Cc:

Sue Birch, Director, Health Care Authority

Mike Kreidler, Washington State Insurance Commissioner

Pam MacEwan, CEO, Washington Health Benefit Exchange

Eileen Cody, State Representative, 34th District

David Frockt, State Senator, 46th District

Annette Cleveland, State Senator, 49th District

Joe Schmick, State Representative, 9th District

Steve O'Ban, State Senator, 28th District