



February 25th, 2025

Director Mary Killough
Illinois Department on Aging
One Natural Resources Way, Suite 100
Springfield, IL 62702-1271

Re: Necessity of Urgent Repairs to Medicaid Application System

Dear Director Killough:

The Coordinated Care Alliance (CCA) represents a statewide network of Care Coordination Units (CCUs) long dedicated to ensuring that Illinois' older adults have access to the services and supports they need. A critical component of this work is assisting participants with Medicaid applications and redeterminations. However, recent changes to the Manage My Case (MMC) and Application for Benefits Eligibility (ABE) platforms have significantly disrupted our ability to fulfill this obligation. These systemic issues, combined with persistent communication barriers between CCUs and local DHS offices, are creating serious consequences for participants, local agencies, and the state.

Since August 2024, CCUs have reported a decline in completed applications directly correlated to the reduced access to MMC. This has led to a troubling increase in Medicaid "churn," where participants lose coverage and only discover their disenrollment when they attempt to access care. Older adults served by the Community Care Program (CCP) often face cognitive impairment and have limited technological abilities. CCUs have reported numerous instances in which delays and confusion resulting from the Medicaid application process have promoted fear and anxiety among participants, particularly as they are depending on Medicaid to ensure continuity of adequate medical care. The size of the population potentially affected by this cannot be overstated; as of November, more than 111,000 Illinois residents relied on CCUs to help facilitate Medicaid applications and renewals.

The impact on local CCUs as social service agencies also is significant and detrimental. The time required to complete a Medicaid application has increased exponentially, now taking six to eight hours, diverting staff from essential care coordination. This has contributed to declining staff morale and a nearly 30% revenue reduction for CCUs since September, jeopardizing the sustainability of programs like CCP.

Implications for the state budget are equally concerning. With CCUs unable to process Medicaid applications and redeterminations in real time, the state is failing to maximize Medicaid enrollment and that directly limits Illinois' ability to leverage federal matching funds. This inefficiency translates to lost resources that could otherwise support critical

Director Mary Killough, Illinois Department on Aging
Letter from Coordinated Care Alliance
2/25/2025
Page 2

aging services. Attached to this letter is a chart showing the slowdown in new Medicaid enrollments since August 2024.

Case studies from across Illinois also are included with this letter to illustrate the specific consequences for participants, CCUs, and the overall administration of Medicaid services.

CCA and its membership reported these issues to the Department on Aging as early as August 2024, and we appreciate the agency's commitment to working with the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to address them. CCA acknowledges the considerable time and efforts of IDOA staff to urge HFS and DHS towards a resolution. Nevertheless, no resolution has been reached, and CCUs continue to encounter major barriers to assisting their clients. We urgently require a solution to this problem. Navigating the Medicaid system will remain extraordinarily cumbersome and extremely inefficient absent improved coordination with DHS.

Immediate approval of CCUs as HFS Application Assistors would provide CCUs with a necessary tool to support Medicaid applications and redeterminations effectively. Improved communication with local DHS offices also is critical. This includes reinstating direct lines of contact, establishing a clear protocol for unresponsive office staff, and restoring in-person community meetings. Intergovernmental collaboration is needed. A formal agreement between HFS, DHS, and IDOA-contracted CCUs would ensure better coordination of Medicaid and MCO enrollment.

We are grateful for the work of IDOA staff in advancing the needs of Illinois' aging population. We value the agency's ongoing efforts to address these challenges, and we look forward to continued collaboration to find a path forward. But given the scale and severity of these challenges, CCA has a duty to our CCU members and the older adults we serve to advocate for a timely resolution. Absent a definitive, near-term timeline for the resolutions of these issues, we are left with no other recourse than to bring this matter to the attention and ask for the assistance of the Governor's office and the General Assembly.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. If you would like to discuss further, I can be reached at bhuffman@coordinatedcarealliance.org or (715) 851-5098.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bailey Huffman", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Bailey Huffman
Executive Director, Coordinated Care Alliance