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July 20, 2020

The Honorable Steve Siolak  
Governor of Nevada  
101 North Carson Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Siolak:

On behalf of the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM), we write to urge you to protect the health of women and children in Nevada by sparing the state’s Medicaid program from across-the-board cuts during the current special session. We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has created both unprecedented demands on Nevada’s safety net programs, including Medicaid, and unprecedented shortfalls in Nevada’s budget. However, reducing known shortfalls by instituting untargeted, across-the-board reductions in payments to Medicaid providers during a public health crisis will result in disparate impacts on women and children, especially those from minority populations. Medicaid covers nearly 50 percent of Nevada births.<sup>i</sup> Cutting payments to the maternity care providers that treat these patients will reduce services, increase wait times, and limit spending on technology to facilitate telemedicine visits during the pandemic, threatening the health of nearly 17,000 pregnant patients and their children annually.<sup>ii</sup>

We are Nevada’s physicians, nurses, genetic counselors, sonographers, and trainees that have dedicated our careers to caring for people with high-risk pregnancies. We see the sickest patients with the most complicated pregnancies, most of whom need additional services and experts involved in their pregnancy care. An increasing majority of our patients rely on Medicaid coverage and without it we fear that pregnancy outcomes will further decline. Prior to the pandemic, the nation was already facing a maternal health crisis that left far too many infants in Nevada without a mother to care for them and far too many pregnant people with life-altering pregnancy complications. These figures are startlingly true for pregnant people of color. We must not let the COVID-19 pandemic amplify the ongoing maternal health crisis by limiting critical maternity care services.

We recognize that a strong Medicaid program can help ensure that our patients are healthy before, during and after pregnancy. Research shows that in states that have expanded Medicaid, such as Nevada, patients have better care access to care before becoming pregnant and begin prenatal care earlier than their peers in non-expansion states.<sup>iii</sup> Further, the data is clear that Medicaid coverage during pregnancy increases access to adequate prenatal care.<sup>iv</sup> The proposed reductions in provider payments have



the potential to limit access to care for pregnant people and reduce the quality of care during a critical time for the health of both mother and baby. The impact of proposed Medicaid cuts will be magnified by the ongoing financial stress placed on maternity care providers in Nevada, which is already facing one of the nation's worst shortages of obstetricians and gynecologists, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>v</sup>

SMFM appreciates the difficult decisions you must make to address the economic impact COVID-19 on Nevada's budget, but strongly urge you to avoid untargeted, across-the-board Medicaid cuts that will further stress the state's maternal-child health care system and restrict access to services during the ongoing pandemic. Please direct any questions on this matter to Rebecca Abbott, Director of Government Relations ([rabbott@smfm.org](mailto:rabbott@smfm.org), 405.642.9391).

Sincerely,

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<sup>i</sup> Medicaid and CHIP Payment Advisory Committee (MACPAC). Medicaid's Role in Financing Maternity Care. January 2020. Available at: <https://www.macpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Medicaid%E2%80%99s-Role-in-Financing-Maternity-Care.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Searing A, Ross D. Medicaid Expansion Fills Gaps in Maternal Health Coverage Leading to Healthier Mothers and Babies. Georgetown Center for Children and Families. May 2019. Available at: <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Maternal-Health-3a.pdf>.

<sup>iv</sup> MACPAC. Access in Brief: Pregnant Women and Medicaid. November 2018. Available at: <https://www.macpac.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Pregnant-Women-and-Medicaid.pdf>.



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<sup>v</sup> Doximity. 2019 OB-GYN Workforce Study. September 2019. Available at:  
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