

December 5, 2024

The Honorable Kay Ivey
Governor of Alabama
State Capitol
Montgomery, AL 36130

Re: Improving Access to Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGMs) for Alabamians with Diabetes

Dear Governor Ivey,

On behalf of the 30 undersigned organizations, representing patients, providers, and organizations interested in improving the lives and health of Alabamians affected by diabetes, we are writing to thank you for your leadership. In particular, we applaud your previous work to improve diabetes care for the 700,000 people in Alabama diagnosed with diabetes¹, to cap insulin costs in 2021, and last year's proclamation naming November "Diabetes Awareness Month" in Alabama. While we are sincerely grateful for these efforts, there is more the State can do to improve the lives and health outcomes of those affected by diabetes who are insured by Medicaid.

As you are keenly aware, Alabama has been greatly impacted by the diabetes epidemic and has one of the highest rates of diabetes in the nation. According to the American Diabetes Association, in 2023, over 15 percent of adults in Alabama have diabetes² and around 6 percent of pregnant women in Alabama are diagnosed with gestational diabetes each year.³ In addition, Type 2 diabetes diagnosis rates among children in Alabama nearly doubled from 2017 to 2021, with a disproportionate increase among children covered by Medicaid.⁴ The American Diabetes Association estimates that diabetes and prediabetes cost the state \$5.4 billion dollars annually, due to the high cost of addressing serious complications such as heart disease, stroke, and end-stage kidney disease leading to high-cost dialysis, as well as the loss of productivity.⁵

Despite this devastating data, Alabama is missing a critical opportunity to ensure that people who are insured through Alabama Medicaid—including pregnant women with gestational diabetes and children diagnosed with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes who are on insulin—have access to the tools and latest cost-saving technology available to manage their disease, to stay healthy and at work or in school, and to stem preventable complications and needless and costly emergency department visits and hospitalizations. Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGMs) offer real-time monitoring and management of blood glucose levels. They also provide patients with alerts and alarms that have been shown to reduce emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

¹ American Diabetes Association. (2023, March). The Burden of Diabetes in Alabama.
https://diabetes.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/ADV_2023_State_Fact_sheets_all_rev_Alabama.pdf

² Ibid.

³ United Health Foundation. (n.d.). *Diabetes - Women in Alabama*. American's Health Rankings.
https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/diabetes_women/AL

⁴ Echols, H. (2022, September 26). *Rise in new-onset type 2 diabetes among Alabama youth during COVID-19 pandemic*. UAB News. <https://www.uab.edu/news/research/item/13131-rise-in-new-onset-type-2-diabetes-among-alabama-youth-during-covid-19-pandemic>

⁵ American Diabetes Association. (n.d.). The Burden of Diabetes in Alabama.
<http://main.diabetes.org/dorg/PDFs/Advocacy/burden-of-diabetes/alabama.pdf>

Specifically, we ask you to update Alabama Medicaid policy to expand access to CGMs to all adults and children with diabetes on insulin, including pregnant women with gestational diabetes, and cut red tape for Alabama doctors and patients by covering CGMs as a Medicaid pharmacy benefit in addition to a durable medical equipment (DME) benefit.

Medicaid coverage of CGMs as a pharmacy benefit would:

- Reduce costs for the current Medicaid population on CGMs;
- Lower hospitalization rates and save taxpayer dollars;
- Keep adults with diabetes healthy and working and keep children with diabetes in school and ready to learn;
- Improve maternal and child health outcomes;
- Eliminate unnecessary paperwork for children and families impacted by diabetes and the healthcare professionals who serve them; and
- Bring Alabama on par with other states' Medicaid and commercial CGM coverage.

Allowing patients to monitor blood glucose levels in real-time has been shown to reduce emergency room visits and hospitalizations by as much as 70 percent.⁶ There is no doubt that expanding access to CGMs and adding pharmacy benefit coverage in addition to durable medical equipment coverage is a win-win-win for patients, families, and state fiscal health. Improved patient outcomes and cost savings define why Florida and Mississippi have significantly improved access to CGMs in Medicaid. We urge you to follow the data and to take immediate steps to improve access to lifesaving CGMs for those who stand to benefit the most – pregnant women, infants and children, and low-income people in rural communities.

We are grateful for your leadership on diabetes-related policies and we urge you to build on your impressive track record by improving Medicaid coverage of CGMs. The undersigned organizations stand ready to support you in this vital and urgently needed work.

Sincerely,

AIDS Alabama

Alabama Affiliate of American College of Nurse-Midwives

Alabama Arise

Alabama Black Women's Roundtable

Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice

Alabama Council for Behavioral Healthcare

Alabama Equitable Neighborhoods Initiative

Alabama State Nurses Association

⁶ Charleer, S., Mathieu, C., Nobels, F., De Block, C., Radermecker, R. P., Hermans, M. P., Taes, Y., Vercammen, C., T'Sjoen, G., Crenier, L., Fieuws, S., Keymeulen, B., Gillard, P., & RESCUE Trial Investigators (2018). Effect of Continuous Glucose Monitoring on Glycemic Control, Acute Admissions, and Quality of Life: A Real-World Study. *The Journal of clinical endocrinology and metabolism*, 103(3), 1224–1232. <https://doi.org/10.1210/jc.2017-02498>

Balm in Gilead
Behavioral Healthcare Alliance of Alabama
Birmingham Friends Meeting
BirthWell Partners
Black Women's Health Imperative
Children with Diabetes
Church & Society, Anniston First United Methodist Church
Community Enabler Developer, Inc.
Diabetes Leadership Council
Diabetes Patient Advocacy Coalition
Faith in Action Alabama
Fall Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation Services LLC
Families USA
First Congregational Church (Birmingham)
Five Horizons Health Services
Kennedy Strategic Communications
Partners In Health
The Arc of Alabama
The Common Touch
Together for Hope
Unity Wellness Center
VOICES for Alabama's Children

CC: Commissioner Stephanie Azar, Alabama Medicaid

CC: Dave White, Policy Advisor, Governor Kay Ivey