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## **A Welcome End to the Bar on Affordable Health Coverage for People With DACA**

*Statement of Shelby Gonzales, Vice President for Immigration Policy on Biden Administration's Proposed Rule*

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced today its plans to make Medicaid and Affordable Care Act marketplace coverage available to people with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This will be a welcome end to the longtime bar on eligibility that has kept many people from being able to access affordable health coverage.

Nearly 600,000 people have DACA today. They are our friends, neighbors, and family members who came to our nation as children but would have had little chance of obtaining a lawful immigration status if not for DACA.

With DACA, people have authorization to work and are able to live without constant fear of deportation. With these protections, people with DACA have thrived in many aspects of their lives including securing good jobs and adding value to their communities in countless ways.

However, people with DACA have been blocked from accessing most government economic and health-related supports that many people use to make ends meet or to afford health insurance when their employers do not offer it. This has left many people with DACA unable to obtain health coverage. As a result, they cannot easily access care to stay healthy or for treatment when they are ill, and they are at risk of incurring expensive medical bills if they get sick.

The Biden Administration made the right call to end the ban on affordable health coverage for people with DACA. People received “deferred action” status for a variety of reasons long before DACA (which created criteria for deferred action for people who arrived in the U.S. as children). All others with a deferred action status meet the immigration-related eligibility standard to enroll in marketplace coverage and the state optional Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance programs for children and pregnant people. The change HHS announced today would end the disparate treatment that has applied only to people with deferred action that was granted under DACA.

The DACA program itself faces court challenges, but there remains strong support for people brought to the U.S. as children who contribute to the country in countless ways. We urge lawmakers to take the next step in solidifying the DACA program to give this group of people — who often have no memory of a home outside of the U.S. — the peace of mind that they can continue to thrive in our nation that honors their contribution and recognizes their belonging. Part of honoring their contributions and belonging is ensuring that they have access to affordable health coverage.

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