

July 31, 2020

Members of the Blue Ribbon Commission:

The Minnesota Patient Advocacy Coalition is a consortium of organizations which has come together to advocate at the state and federal levels for preserving and enhancing access to quality health care services for all Minnesotans. Representing millions of Minnesota patients, we are committed to ensuring access to meaningful and affordable health care coverage while lowering costs and improving quality of care. Together, we speak in one voice to ensure access to quality, affordable health care for all.

Our comments are not directed at the technical scope of the Blue Ribbon Commission's draft recommendations. We recognize the value of simplifying programs, increasing efficiencies, and saving money when it can be done without causing harm to Minnesotans, and appreciate the Commission's efforts in this regard. Our comments are instead directed at the guiding philosophies of the Commission's work and the ways in which its recommendations will be put to use.

First, we urge Commission members to remember the needs and interests of Minnesota's patients in all five of the Commission's charges, including **improve access to health and human services programs to address geographic, racial, and ethnic disparities, among others**. These programs exist to make lives better, and changes to these programs must always be considered through this lens.

In future legislative proposals and budget-balancing conversations, we urge the Commission and state policymakers to prioritize protecting access to care and services for all Minnesotans. This need is doubly important in times of crisis: the last thing our state should do during an economic downturn is to reduce quality and access to key safety-net services that promote health, security, and wellbeing.

Finally, we recognize the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the work of the Commission, but we encourage decision makers and the Commission to continue its work on health equity strategies. Racism is a public health crisis, and now is the time for Minnesota to prioritize health equity and systems transformation if we truly aim to improve the health of all Minnesotans.

We thank the Blue Ribbon Commission for its ongoing efforts, and look forward to helping create a healthier Minnesota that benefits all communities.

Sincerely,

Signed members of the Patient Advocacy Coalition

*The ALS Association, MN/ND/SD Chapter*

*American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network*

*American Heart Association*

*Arthritis Foundation*

*Be The Match/National Marrow Donor Program*

*Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota*

*JustUs Health*

*The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society*

*Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers*

*Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance*

*Minnesota Breast Cancer Coalition*

*National Kidney Foundation*

*National Multiple Sclerosis Society*

*National Psoriasis Foundation*