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Howard H. Hendrick, *President*

Cari DeSantis, *Interim Executive Director*

September 10, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
SH-522
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
SR-361A
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
235 CHOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John A. Boehner
House Minority Leader
United State House of Representatives
1011 LHOB
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi and House Minority Leader Boehner:

The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) appreciates the work that Congress has already done this year to help states weather an incredibly difficult budgetary period by extending increased Federal Medical Assistance Percentage funds. This additional funding will help states greatly in meeting the growing need seen at health and human services intake offices around the country. While we know that the ability of the federal government to fund programs is itself being stretched thin, we hope that before Congress adjourns for the year you will address a handful of very important issues either this month or during a lame-duck session later this year.

- The **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program** will expire September 30, 2010. APHSA hopes that Congress will move quickly to assure that – should a full TANF reauthorization not be possible this year – the program will be extended for at least one full year (through fiscal year 2011). APHSA also strongly recommends that Congress provide an extension for the TANF Supplemental Grants, a feature of the program since its inception in 1996 which 17 states rely on as part of their annual TANF funding.
- In addition, the fiscal strain facing states has made the continuation of the **TANF Emergency Contingency Fund** an urgently needed and important vehicle for states to help stabilize families in crisis. Unfortunately, many states are now being forced to start terminating their programs, such as subsidized employment, due to the imminent expiration of these funds on September 30. The programs funded by the ECF provide critical services to families in need, and states have demonstrated their responsible use of these funds which has been well documented. We urge you to assure that the TANF ECF extension is attached to a suitable legislative vehicle that will be approved by Congress and promptly enacted.

- **Child Support Enforcement** has been a consistently high-performing program for many state health and human service programs, processing an estimated 15.8 million cases nationwide in FY 2009. For those cases where states are able to collect current and back child support, this money goes to help keep millions of families from slipping into poverty and requiring additional economic assistance. While Congress temporarily delayed cuts to the Child Support program that were passed in the Deficit Reduction Act, these cuts will once again take effect after September 30. APHSA encourages Congress to quickly pass an extension of the federal match for Child Support incentive funds and thus prevent the inevitable cutbacks in service that such federal cuts would trigger.
- APHSA applauds the proposed increases to the **Child Care and Development Block Grant** that were included in the recent Senate and House Appropriations bills. At the same time, we continue to support a \$1 billion increase for the CCDBG program for FY 2011. Without an increase, states face a major funding cliff, and the country's most at-risk working families will lose child care with the end of Recovery Act funds in September 2011. Child care waiting lists will soar; a significant number of child care providers will have to close their businesses; and low-income parents' increased need for child care will not be met and subsequently, they will not be able to work. APHSA hopes that Congress will deal with this issue as soon as possible.
- **Child welfare financing reform** is another critical issue that Congress should not ignore. The latest data shows states continue to improve performance in reducing the number of children in foster care. Reform should expand covered services by allowing states to use Title IV-E funds on services other than foster care; expand covered populations by delinking IV-E eligibility from the 1996 Aid to Families with Dependent Children standard; and maintain federal investment in Title IV-B and IV-E to meet the needs of children who come to the attention of the child welfare system and their families. These three suggestions would add minimal costs to the federal government because they focus on utilizing existing resources more effectively. Costs are contained through changes to the formula structure. In FY 2009 there were 423,000 children in care, down from 463,000 in FY 2008. To continue this positive trend, states need increased flexibility so they can target resources to prevent children from coming into care in the first place.

We hope that you will take these important issues into consideration over the next several weeks. We at APHSA look forward to working with you as we continue to help low-income families on the road to economic and family stability. If you have questions please contact Larry Goolsby, Legislative Director, at larry.goolsby@aphsa.org or (202) 682-0100, ext. 239.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cari DeSantis
Interim Executive Director