Preventive Services: Health Equity & Common Sense

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 Importance of Access to Preventive Services

1. Avoid costly health conditions & reduce unnecessary utilization of care
2. Ensure early detection & provide bridge to necessary treatment/management
3. Prevent the spread of disease
4. Identify other co-morbid health conditions and health-related social needs through
5. Improve health equity & address disproportionate burden on underserved and marginalized populations
6. Reduce costs to individuals, payors, and society
Access to no-cost preventive care is critical to health equity

ACA preventive services requirements have had a meaningful impact on disparities in access and health outcomes:

• 150+ million people have gained access to no-cost preventive services & comprehensive coverage – significant declines in racial disparities in uninsurance rates
• Improvements in colon & breast cancer screenings, particularly among Black & Hispanic populations
• Reductions in incidence of hypertension, heart disease, and mental health conditions
• Improved access to contraceptive care, cholesterol screenings, immunizations, and other services

BUT...inequities in access to care still persist due to structural barriers
Barriers to Preventive Care

- Uninsurance/undersinsurance
- Lack of clarity in state/federal coverage standards (e.g., EHB)
- Inconsistent and confusing plan documentation
- Drug formulary adherence to guidelines
- Service limits and insurer guidance to providers
  - E.g., fluoride treatments for children, number of covered prenatal visits
- Inadequate adjudication of claims denials
- Cost-sharing & co-pays (even when modest)
- Health-related social needs, transportation, etc.
Affordable Care Act (ACA) Preventive Services Requirements

Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)
- Appointed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Establishes guidelines on vaccines & immunizations

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- Federal agency as endorsing body
- Guidelines on preventive services for women & children (including AAP’s Bright Futures)

US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)
- Appointed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
- Regularly makes evidence-based recommendations which are automatically included in ACA requirements

Preventive services recommended or endorsed by these bodies must be covered without co-pays or cost-sharing by all non-grandfathered health insurance plans and Medicaid
Braidwood v. Becerra

- Brought by plaintiffs claiming requirement for self-funded plans to cover PrEP, violates religious freedom
- Challenges USPSTF authority, citing non-delegation doctrine
- Fifth Circuit hearing case after decision to invalidate USPSTF preventive services requirements
- Stay issued in May, requiring non-grandfathered plans to continue covering USPSTF services, pending decision later this year

- At risk: access to dozens of preventive services for 150+ million people, including:
  - Lung cancer screenings, PrEP, HIV screenings, Hepatitis screenings, etc.
- Increasing the cost of access to these services would only compound existing inequities
- States have already begun taking action to enshrine ACA preventive services protections but gaps still exist for self-insured plans
  - Massachusetts among strongest, prohibiting cost-sharing for “federally-defined preventive services & leveraging state individual mandate to broaden protections
Thank you.