

RESOLUTION NO. 2007-118

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA URGING THE HONORABLE GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST TO PAUSE THE CURRENT PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDICAID REFORM IN NASSAU COUNTY, SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE SEPTEMBER 1, 2007.**

**WHEREAS**, the members of the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners are duly elected under the Florida Constitution by the citizens in Nassau County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Nassau County Board of County Commissioners is charged with protecting the health, safety and well being of the citizens under the Florida Constitution; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Legislature has adopted legislation that authorizes the Agency for Health Care Administration to implement a plan for reform of Medicaid benefits for low income Medicaid eligible citizens who reside in Nassau County; and

**WHEREAS**, federal approval of the waiver sought to implement this reform plan for Medicaid benefits was contingent upon improving access to care for low income Medicaid eligible citizens who reside in proposed pilot areas, which include Nassau County; and

**WHEREAS**, since implementation of Medicaid reform in Duval and Broward Counties, concerns have been raised by advocates, citizens, providers and researchers regarding the quality of care, equal access to care and operational concerns centered around reductions in resources for services for the most severely impaired and disabled of our citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, the impact of many Medicaid reform plans has operated to reduce the expenditure of state funds as evidenced by a projection by the state Medicaid office that reform was expected to reduce Medicaid costs by \$31 million; and

**WHEREAS**, the stated purpose of implementing Medicaid reform was to control costs without reducing access to care; and

**WHEREAS**, the state revenue estimating conference last year showed that projections were \$251 million over what was expected due to a decrease in case load growth and costs that were expected to impact the state budget; and

**WHEREAS**, since Medicaid reform was implemented in Duval County many local not for profit agencies have struggled to remain open due to restrictions on access to services that could be provided and changes or delays in payment and ability to earn Medicaid have caused financial instability that pose a challenge to the viability of these small not for profit agencies; and

**WHEREAS**, the Shands provider service network has not expanded into Nassau County as part of the rural expansion phase of the reform pilot project; and

**WHEREAS**, Wellcare, the largest Medicaid HMO in Florida, has not expanded into rural areas of the reform pilot which includes Nassau County; and

**WHEREAS**, a recent study funded by the Jessie DuPont Foundation of Jacksonville and conducted by Georgetown University found physicians leaving reform plans because of concerns over adequate levels of reimbursement for specialized care, thereby further restricting access to life saving services; and

**WHEREAS**, the Inspector General's Office of the Agency for Health Care Administration has an ongoing investigation that is examining issues regarding access in Medicaid reform areas and which investigation is not yet complete; and

**WHEREAS**, the University of Florida is charged with conducting research, and results are not yet available to assess plan performance and consumer satisfaction; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Legislature has recently adopted changes to the laws of Florida, requiring local counties to reduce property taxes and have placed on the ballot for voter approval a special amendment that would significantly reduce resources local government would have available from property taxes; and

**WHEREAS**, the impact of property tax reform has already resulted in reductions to the local not for profit safety net provider system; and

**WHEREAS**, adoption of the super exemption would substantially or possibly eliminate local resources available for local not for profits and other safety net providers that form the infrastructure of providers that Medicaid consumers rely upon for access to care; and

**WHEREAS**, the impact of reductions in access to Medicaid revenue combined with the reduction or elimination of local funding for not for profits would have a destabilizing impact on the financial viability of local not for profits; and

**WHEREAS**, destabilization of local not for profits and the collapse or elimination of these agencies would serve to undermine the ability of reform plans to be

successful in ensuring access to high quality of care and services that are medically necessary; and

**WHEREAS**, failure to provide access to care would increase the use of crisis-driven services and place an increased demand for emergency care on the local Sheriff's Office, County Fire and Rescue and increase the number of people seeking care at local emergency rooms; and

**WHEREAS**, the potential impact upon the county would create extraordinary demands upon the county budget and would pose a threat to the health and safety of the county's most vulnerable citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of County Commissioners has a duty to protect citizens from potential harm that could arise from a failure of all or part of the health care delivery system for low income Medicaid eligible citizens who reside in Nassau County; and

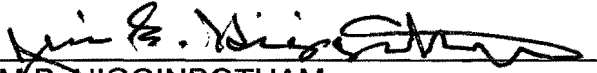
**WHEREAS**, the Governor of the State of Florida, the Honorable Charlie Crist, has the executive authority to "pause" the current plan for implementation of Medicaid reform in Nassau County scheduled to start on September 1, 2007.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** this 13th day of July, 2007 that the Board of County Commissioners of Nassau County, Florida, being duly elected by the citizens to protect and serve the citizens, does hereby:

1. Request the prompt and immediate assistance of Florida Governor Charlie Crist in providing immediate relief to the potential threat that endangers the lives of the most vulnerable citizens in Nassau County of the State of Florida.
2. The Board of County Commissioners specifically seeks an executive order that would "pause" the current plan for implementation of Medicaid reform expansion until 90 days after the January 29, 2008 ballot initiative on property tax reform to allow the country to examine changes that might be needed to ensure the necessary protection of local citizens, to assess the impact on not for profits that form the local safety net system of providers, to conduct one or more special workshops to surface information regarding the success and concerns centered around Medicaid reform as it may relate to rural counties, to benefit from information that is now being collected by the University of Florida and the Inspector's General Office to ascertain whether action should be taken by the county commissioners to determine whether additional protections may be warranted before proceeding with implementation.


3. The Board of County Commissioners hereby directs that a copy of this Resolution be immediately provided to the Governor and members of the Nassau County Legislative Delegation.


BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
NASSAU COUNTY, FLORIDA


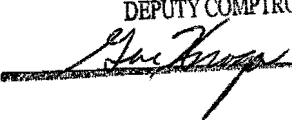
  
JIM B. HIGGINBOTHAM  
Its: Chairman

Attest as to  
Chairman's Signature:

Approved as to form by the  
Nassau County Attorney:

  
JOHN A. CRAWFORD  
Its: Ex-Officio Clerk

  
DAVID A. HALLMAN

  
REVIEWED BY GENE KNAGA  
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER  
 DATE 7/13/07