



October 19, 2021

Dear Progressive Caucus Chair Jayapal and Steering Committee members:

We, members of the [Southerners for Medicaid Expansion](#) coalition, lead movements for health and racial equity across the South. Thank you for your leadership, and for [urging Congress](#) to secure progressive investments in Build Back Better legislation that our communities have long needed.

**Yet, we are disappointed that the [recent letter](#) from the CPC to Speaker Pelosi laying out the Caucus' five core priorities for the Build Back Better Act does not mention the urgent need to close the federal Medicaid coverage gap for 2.2 million low-income Americans—most of whom are people of color with no pathway to health care coverage. Given our shared commitment to universal health care, economic justice, and racial equity, we urge you to add closing the Medicaid coverage gap to your priorities — it's one of the most straightforward policies we can adopt to fulfill those commitments.**

We recognize your leadership amid a challenging political climate in Congress, yet we want to stress that you cannot forget the millions of Americans in the coverage gap. It's no accident that 60% of these Americans are people of color, or that more than 90% live in former slave states. These Americans have endured for years—particularly during the pandemic—with no pathway to reliable health care, and [many are battling chronic illnesses](#) without proper treatment. Their lives—[roughly 7,000 each year](#)—are quite literally on the line.

Our health care system's contempt for low-income Black and brown Americans is profound, costly, and has deep roots. Congress helped build those roots over 50 years ago when it designed Medicaid in a manner that allowed states to deny health care to communities of color. Now, Congress must correct this historic injustice for good and deliver this basic human right to millions of Americans. Further, many of these Americans are the very essential workers who — even without health coverage — put their lives on the line to help our communities make it through the pandemic.

We appreciate your dedication to health, economic, and racial justice and hope to continue working together towards a future where every American has quality, affordable, and comprehensive health care.

Respectfully yours,

The Southerners for Medicaid Expansion Coalition:

Alabama Arise  
Cover Alabama  
Florida Health Justice Project  
Florida Policy Institute  
Florida Voices for Health  
Georgians for a Healthy Future  
Mississippi Center for Justice  
Mississippi Health Advocacy Program  
North Carolina Justice Center  
SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center  
Sick Of It TX Campaign  
Tennessee Justice Center  
Tennessee Health Care Campaign  
Texas Organizing Project