

# Health Coalition for Children and Youth

June 22, 2009

Secretary Susan Dreyfus  
Department of Social and Health Services  
1115 Washington St. SE  
Olympia, WA 98504-5130

Dear Secretary Dreyfus:

On behalf of the Health Coalition for Children and Youth (HCCY), we would like to welcome and congratulate you upon your appointment as Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). We are excited to have the opportunity to work with you on issues affecting the health of our state's children and families, to ensure that Washington remains a national leader in health care policy.

As a program upon which families have come to rely, Apple Health for Kids demonstrates our state's commitment to meeting the Governor's and legislature's goal of ensuring that all children have health coverage by 2010. A key element to the success of Apple Health for Kids will be the implementation of House Bill 2128 as passed in the 2009 state legislative session. We look forward to working with you and your staff on a variety of projects outlined in this bill that builds on policies underway within the department.

One important decision is the appointment of a single staff person to coordinate and oversee the Apple Health for Kids program. We understand that Governor Gregoire has delegated the authority to make this appointment to you.

The Health Coalition for Children and Youth believes that a skilled leader, granted the appropriate authority, is needed to implement the vision of Apple Health for Kids. This vision goes beyond health coverage and includes access to a medical home and improved health outcomes for all children. To be successful, this leader must have the ability to break down organizational silos, link programs proactively across divisions and across departments, and make Apple Health for Kids function as a single, coherent, innovative health program for Washington's children. This day-to-day leadership is required to ensure that Washington takes advantage of innovative policy opportunities and funding options, and is able to play a leadership role in implementing broader health care reforms as the nation moves toward coverage for all Americans.

A single point person for Apple Health for Kids can serve the following goals:

American Diabetes Association  
American Lung Association, WA Chapter  
Benton Franklin Community Health Alliance  
Cedar River Group  
Children's Alliance  
Children's Home Society of Washington  
CHOICE Regional Health Network  
Communities Connect  
Community Health Plan of Washington  
Community Minded Enterprises  
Group Health Cooperative  
King County Project Access  
Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle  
Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington State  
March of Dimes, WA Chapter  
Mary Bridge Children's Hospital – MultiCare Health System  
Molina Healthcare of Washington  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, WA Chapter  
National Association of Social Workers, Washington State Chapter  
Northwest Health Law Advocates  
Northwest International Health Action Coalition  
Planned Parenthood Public Policy Network of Washington  
Public Health - Seattle & King County  
Sacred Heart Children's Hospital  
School Nurse Organization of Washington  
Sea Mar Community Health Centers  
Seattle Children's Hospital  
SEIU Healthcare 1199NW  
SEIU WA State Council  
Solid Ground  
Statewide Poverty Action Network  
Swedish Medical Center  
Washington Association Churches  
Washington Association of Community and Migrant Health Centers  
Washington Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics  
Washington Community Action Network  
Washington Dental Service Foundation  
Washington Health Foundation  
Washington State Hospital Association  
Washington State Nurses Association  
Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO  
Washington State Oral Health Coalition  
WithinReach  
Yakima County Health Care Coalition

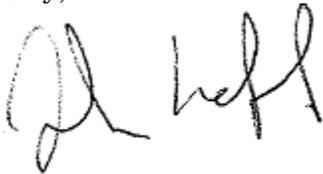
- Implement the program's vision in a complex environment, focusing on coverage, access and opportunities for improvement in health status while managing costs.
- Track and report on progress using data to improve program performance, increase transparency, and move toward better child health outcomes.
- Coordinate the various activities across separate divisions and departments. In particular, low-income families receive important health and human services from both the Economic Services Administration and the Health and Recovery Services Administration. These administrations within DSHS need to work hand-in-glove to assure that families experience seamless coverage for their benefits and that the state receives maximal federal funding.
- Develop innovative outreach strategies and streamline enrollment into Apple Health.
- Serve as a point of contact for external departments, stakeholders, and policymakers.

In summary, we are asking you to appoint a leader who will be accountable for integrating all the various aspects of the Apple Health program, reporting directly to you as Secretary. We believe this will ensure that Apple Health for Kids functions across department administrations and receives the level of attention that is appropriate for a program that is so critical to the children of our State, and so central to the priorities of our Governor and the legislature.

We believe that Apple Health for Kids has the potential to serve as a model for national health care reform efforts. Through elements such as opening the program to both low- and moderate-income families, ground-breaking enrollment and retention policies, and inclusive eligibility criteria, Washington's Apple Health for Kids program has earned well-deserved national recognition. We now have the opportunity, through the appointment of a program leader, to advance Apple Health for Kids even further, through coordination of current activities and new innovative practices.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments, and are available to answer any questions that you might have, please contact Lan Nguyen, staff to HCCY and the Health Policy Coordinator at Children's Alliance, at (206) 324-0340, ext. 15, or [Lan@childrensalliance.org](mailto:Lan@childrensalliance.org). We look forward to working with you towards our mutual goal of improving the lives of children and families in Washington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Neff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being more prominent than the last name "Neff".

John M. Neff, MD  
Chair, Health Coalition for Children and Youth  
Professor, Department of Pediatrics  
University of Washington School of Medicine  
Director, Center for Children with Special Needs  
Seattle Childrens