**From:** Birch, Sue (HCA) <sue.birch@hca.wa.gov>

**Date:** Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 7:28 AM

**To:** Melissa <Melissa@bogardjohnson.com> **Cc:** Voris, Molly (GOV) <Molly.Voris@gov.wa.gov>, Lindeblad, MaryAnne (HCA) <maryanne.lindeblad@hca.wa.gov>, Needham, Mich'l P. (HCA) <Mich'l.Needham@hca.wa.gov>

**Subject:** Medicaid PT/OT/Speech proposed elimination | HCA Response

Dear Ms. Johnson:

Please forward this response to Dr. Gersh, Ms. Szewczyk and Ms. Lessard. f

The Governor’s Office asked me to respond to your October 22, 2020 letter regarding the Health Care Authority’s (HCA) Operating Budget proposal submitted to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) on September 15, 2020.

As you know, our proposal contains many unfortunate but potentially necessary budget reduction options including occupational, physical and speech therapy services for adult Medicaid enrollees. The options, as outlined in HCA’s budget proposal, represent painful cuts to programs and services that none of us want to take. The governor and legislature requested this information to make the difficult budget reduction decisions we all face at this time. We understand and appreciate the impacts that such reductions may cause for Medicaid enrollees and providers.

Our priority, when considering budget reductions, is to preserve access to affordable health care services for the most vulnerable to the degree that is possible. However, to achieve the necessary targets for budget reductions required in the current economic downturn, we all must consider and put forward reductions in areas that you and I agree are important. Our proposed reductions are not a judgement of the importance or critical nature of certain services, and instead reflect what is allowable within the Medicaid program requirements.

HCA staff are working to reduce expenditures to the extent possible while preserving access to care. HCA has frozen hiring, contracts, equipment purchases, staff have taken seven mandatory furlough days so far, and we continue seek innovations that will improve value in the services provided.

I appreciate your partnership in these unprecedented times and welcome your ideas as we move forward.

Sincerely,

|  |
| --- |
| **Susan E. Birch, MBA, BSN, RN**DirectorWashington State Health Care AuthorityP.O. Box 45502Olympia, WA 98504-5502Pronouns: she/herExecutive Assistant –Michelle Cleary360-725-1040Michelle.cleary@hca.wa.gov <http://www.hca.wa.gov/> |
| **www.hca.wa.gov** | <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/connect-us> |

Twitter: @WaHCADirector