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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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***Tennessee Primary Care Association Statement
Regarding Medicaid Block Grant Law***

(Nashville, Tenn.) - Public Chapter 481, signed by Governor Bill Lee last week, directs the Governor and TennCare to enter into negotiations with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to convert Tennessee's federal share of Medicaid funding into a block grant.

As the membership organization for community health centers in Tennessee, the Tennessee Primary Care Association (TPCA) advocates for community health centers and the 437,000 Tennesseans who are their patients. Approximately one-third of Tennessee community health center patients have Medicaid coverage; this coverage is critical to ensuring that these individuals and families have access to the quality care necessary to maintain healthy, productive lives. Medicaid also helps to ensure stability for community health centers, which operate on slim margins, as they provide care to patients who are uninsured or lack other resources.

While it is not yet known what will be contained in the block grant waiver amendment proposal, TPCA is concerned that a cap on the federal share of the TennCare budget could eventually pressure Tennessee to cover fewer Tennesseans, limit Medicaid benefits, or reduce Medicaid reimbursement to providers. Any one of these changes would be devastating to the viability of community health centers and the ability of their patients to access quality health care.

We understand that the state is motivated by its intention to control and maximize financial efficiencies while gaining state flexibility. TPCA implores Governor Lee and TennCare to safeguard access to care for Tennesseans throughout the negotiations. We further urge the administration to ensure that the waiver amendment plans for changes in health care inflation, population growth, and demographics that may increase the number of TennCare eligible Tennesseans. As the waiver amendment is drafted, TPCA will continue to work closely with the Governor's office and TennCare in fulfilling our mission to improve access to primary health care as the voice of Tennessee's community health centers.

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