NEWS RELEASE

ACLU of Massachusetts Will Monitor Implementation of New Caritas-Centene Health Plan to Ensure Access to Family Planning Services

Calls on Health Connector to Monitor As Well

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The ACLU of Massachusetts applauds the Commonwealth Health Insurance Connector Authority Board for addressing concerns about access to a complete range of sexual health and family planning services under the new Commonwealth Care managed care plan proposed by Caritas Christi Health Care and Centene Corporation. Prior to today's Board vote approving the new joint venture, members conducted a thorough, frank discussion indicating that they had pursued questions raised by the ACLU and its partner organizations, had received assurances that plan members will receive comprehensive and cohesive access to family planning services, and would monitor the plan's implementation to ensure real-world access.

"We appreciate that Connector board members not only received assurances about access to reproductive health services prior to approving this plan, but made it clear that they will be watching as the plan moves forward," said ACLU staff attorney Gavi Wolfe. According to Wolfe, "Implementation is where the rubber meets the road. We will join the Connector in monitoring to make sure that patients are fully informed about the limitations to services that Caritas-affiliated providers can offer and that patients seeking family planning services receive seamless care."

The ACLU of Massachusetts is committed to ensuring that all people in the Commonwealth have access to constitutionally protected reproductive health care -- both as a matter of law and in practice. The ACLU of Massachusetts is pleased that the new plan has publicly affirmed that all family planning and reproductive health services, including contraception and abortion, will be readily accessible in-network, with no referral from a primary care physician required.

Sarah Wunsch, another attorney at the ACLU, noted that the organization would be paying close attention to whether enrollees are given accurate and upfront information about how this new plan will work. In addition, "if Commonwealth Care members encounter difficulties when seeking basic health care, including reproductive health services or abortions, we expect that the Connector will take action to make sure that Commonwealth Care plans provide access to all services required by law."

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