North Sound Accountable
Community of Health

September 30, 2015

Victoria Wachino
Director of the Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue, Southwest
Washington, DC 20201

**Re:** Washington State's Medicaid transformation waiver application.

Dear Ms. Wachino,

Eighty percent of health is determined by factors outside the traditional healthcare system; therefore health transformation requires authentic cross-sector engagement. The North Sound Accountable Community of Health (ACH) supports Washington State's 1115 Medicaid Transformation waiver application as a vital opportunity to improve the health of our communities through genuine community engagement and a collaborative regional approach.

**Who we are:** The North Sound encompasses five counties and is home to over one million people, including 8 Tribes. Our geography includes both urban and rural settings and spans from mountains to islands. The North Sound ACH Governing Body members represent 17 sectors including but not limited to Behavioral Health, Business, Consumers, Education, public and private Health Plans, Hospitals, Housing, Primary Care, Social Services & Supports, and Philanthropy as well as four federally recognized Tribal Nations. The Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement (WAHA) is acting as our current administrative organization.

**Our mission:** The North Sound ACH is an alliance of 17 sectors collaborating to transform our health systems to improve health, improve the experience of care, increase access, and lower costs for all residents in Snohomish, Skagit, Island, San Juan and Whatcom counties.

The North Sound ACH finds our common direction in our shared understanding that health is more than medical care and we are collectively committed to transformative, measureable improvements in the health of our communities. We are steadfastly working to reduce health disparities and improve overall population health. The North Sound ACH has started conversations for collaboration in a range of potential projects including supportive housing, community paramedicine, provider training, and care coordination. We plan to move forward as a region based on our shared priorities. Funding from the 1115 waiver would provide a significant investment and allow us to accelerate our work of health transformation.

**Our accomplishments:** Over the past year, the North Sound ACH has developed an evolving governance structure, identified an initial list of shared regional health priorities, and collaborated on a pilot project to lay the groundwork for coordination of care management programs in our region. We endeavor to present a multi-sector voice for delivery system reform, strengthen clinical-community linkages, and find innovative solutions to lower costs while increasing the quality of care.

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**Why we support the waiver:** Waiver funds would provide a substantial investment toward health transformation. This investment would accelerate and build on local strategies already underway to improve population health, reduce avoidable use of intensive services, and accelerate the transition to value-based payment.

As a multi-sector collaborative focused on transforming health in our region, the North Sound ACH is committed to partnering with the state of Washington and CMS to achieve the Triple Aim™ for Medicaid clients. With the right level and type of support together with a reasonable timeframe, we would be well positioned to take on the responsibilities as a coordinating entity. Stakeholders around our table are currently partnering to carry out projects that will address regional health needs.

Healthier Washington is unique because it operates through a broad collaborative regional approach. The waiver application shares this approach. Therefore we support Washington's waiver application because it prioritizes robust community engagement to drive transformation.

Sincerely,

Joe Valentine
Chair, North Sound Accountable Community of Health
Executive Director, North Sound Mental Health Administration

*This letter was approved by the North Sound ACH Governing Body on September 29, 2015.*

**The North Sound ACH Mission:**
*Continually improve the health of our communities and the people who live in them, improve health care access, quality, and the experience of care, and lower per capita health care costs in the North Sound region which includes Snohomish, Skagit, San Juan, Island and Whatcom counties*