Medicaid 2.0 Press Conference Opening Remarks

By Joan Randell
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Thank you, Linda. The Nicholson Foundation appreciates your leadership of the multi-stakeholder process that created this Blueprint, which provides recommendations to modernize New Jersey’s Medicaid program.

I am frequently asked two questions: why did The Nicholson Foundation conceive and fund the Medicaid 2.0 initiative, which led to this Blueprint? And, what do we hope will come out of it?

First, the why. Like the Quality Institute, The Nicholson Foundation works to improve healthcare in New Jersey. Medicaid 2.0 reflects our mission to strengthen the healthcare delivery system that serves New Jersey’s most vulnerable populations.

The current Medicaid program has often not met the needs of its recipients. There are obstacles to access. Care is fragmented. And there is limited capacity to treat the whole person by concurrently addressing physical, behavioral, and health-related social needs. If the status quo persists, the costs of the program will continue to grow without demonstrable improvements in health outcomes.

These issues are by no means unique to New Jersey. We looked around the country to find out how other states were addressing them. New York, Ohio, Connecticut and Oregon have all recently gone through rigorous processes to modernize their Medicaid programs. Nicholson wanted to help New Jersey undergo a similar process to regain its place as a national healthcare innovator.

Because Medicaid touches so many aspects of the healthcare system, we were convinced that the modernization of Medicaid in New Jersey had to start from the ground up. Bringing lasting change required hearing many diverse stakeholder voices, considering many different ideas, and reaching consensus on many difficult issues. If you take a look at the Blueprint’s appendix, you will see a list of 140 organizations that collaborated to develop it. This same spirit of community-grounded cooperation will be essential moving forward.

And that brings me to the second question: What do we hope will come next?

As we all know, a blueprint is but a plan. And, the initial phase of the collaborative process that produced this plan, ends today. Now, phase 2 begins. The Nicholson Foundation is committed to continuing the successful stakeholder process and seeing many of their recommendations implemented. We will be supporting further efforts to help make this happen.

These efforts come at a critical time. There is great political uncertainty about the future of federal Medicaid funding. And here in New Jersey, a new governor and new legislators will take office in 2018.

No matter who these future policymakers are, they will have common concerns about healthcare in the Garden State. They will benefit from having a ready-to-implement plan that can facilitate access to, and improve the quality and costs of healthcare for Medicaid recipients. The Medicaid 2.0 Blueprint, rooted in evidence and grounded in consensus, is just such a plan.

The Nicholson Foundation is proud to have funded the process that led to the Blueprint’s creation. We would like to sincerely thank the many stakeholders that lent their time and expertise to shape it.

We are extraordinarily grateful that, in the Quality Institute, we had the right partner. The Quality Institute is respected throughout the state as an unbiased, non-partisan voice for improving healthcare.

I’m now pleased to introduce from the Quality Institute, Matt D’Oria, who is the Chief Transformation Officer for Medicaid 2.0. He will discuss the Blueprint’s recommendations.