

## STATE OF COLORADO SICKLE-CELL ANEMIA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 14, 2020

### Black Democratic Legislative Caucus of Colorado

State Representative Leslie Herod, Chair  
State Senator Rhonda Fields, Vice-Chair

### Colorado Democratic Latino Caucus

State Representative Serena Gonzales-Gutierrez, Co-Chair  
State Senator Robert Rodriguez, Co-Chair

### **Re: Colorado's Sickle Cell Treatment and Research Center & World Sickle Cell Awareness Day – June 19, 2020**

Dear Representative Gonzales-Gutierrez, Representative Herod, Senator Fields and Senator Rodriguez:

The Colorado Sickle-Cell Anemia Advisory Committee (“Committee”) consults with the University of Colorado School of Medicine on the operations of the Colorado Sickle Cell Treatment and Research Center (“Center”), and its patient care clinics at Children’s Hospital Colorado and the University of Colorado Hospital on the CU Anschutz Medical Campus. The Center was created by legislation in 1972 and is partially funded by state general fund monies that come to the School of Medicine through its state allocation.

While the Center is not anticipating a budget shortfall for 2020 – we want to highlight the importance of the work they do and the dedication of the staff. Dr. Hassell, Director of the Center, and her team have been phenomenal in providing comprehensive care to patients and education to other healthcare providers treating children and adults with sickle cell disease (SCD). They serve approximately 85% African American, 10% Hispanic, and 5% other racial demographic patients – most of which are uninsured or on Medicaid. With the growth of our state, the numbers of those with SCD has also risen.

Systemic issues in access to quality care, structural racism and health inequities continue to be a challenge in our healthcare system, and persons with SCD are at a heightened risk because their bodies are immunocompromised. Many individuals living with SCD are unable to access quality care and are limited by a lack of effective treatment options. The Center does its best to bridge this gap and provide quality care and resources to individuals, their families, caregivers, and providers.

Finally, in addition to being Juneteenth in the United States, June 19<sup>th</sup> is also known as World Sickle Cell Awareness Day. The international awareness day is observed annually with the goal to increase public knowledge and an understanding of SCD. Please consider the Committee as a resource for any questions you may have, or how to contact our local community-based organizations.

Thank you for all the work you do for our state, particularly, being a voice for our diverse and often disenfranchised communities during this challenging and unprecedented time. It is seen and appreciated.

Sincerely,

Nicole D. Shoemaker, Chair  
Colorado Sickle-Cell Anemia Advisory Committee

Cc: Dr. John J. Reilly, Jr. Dean of the University of Colorado School of Medicine  
Dr. Kathryn Hassell, Director of the Colorado Sickle Cell Treatment and Research Center  
Dr. Rachel Nuss, Associate Director of the Colorado Sickle Cell Treatment and Research Center  
Deidre Johnson, CEO and Executive Director of The Center for African American Health