



January 20, 2026

Honourable Lena Metlege Diab
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6
lenametlege.diab@parl.gc.ca

RE: Interim Federal Health Program Changes and the Impact on Refugee Children and Families with Disabilities and Medical Complexity

Dear Minister Diab,

On behalf of the Family Support Institute of British Columbia (FSI), I am writing to express our deep concern regarding the announced changes to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), which will introduce a 30% copayment requirement for prescriptions and supplemental health services, effective May 1.

The Family Support Institute of BC is a provincial non-profit organization that supports families who have a child or family member with a disability, medical complexity, or diverse support needs across the lifespan. Our organization is unique in that all our staff and volunteers are family members themselves. We are rooted in lived experience. Our peer-to-peer model exists because families supporting families creates trust, understanding, and meaningful pathways forward when systems are complex, inaccessible, or overwhelming.

Each year, we support thousands of families across British Columbia, including families who are refugees, newcomers, and asylum seekers. Many of these families are caring for children with significant medical needs, including those requiring specialized equipment, feeding supports such as G-tube supplies, mobility devices, therapies, medications, and ongoing clinical care. These families are often navigating trauma, displacement, language barriers, and poverty simultaneously, while trying to ensure the safety, stability, and health of their children.

The introduction of a 30% copayment for essential prescriptions and supplemental services will create an immediate and severe barrier to care. These are not optional supports. They are medically necessary, life-sustaining services that enable children to breathe safely, receive nutrition, move, communicate, and participate in their communities. For families who are already struggling to secure housing and food, these additional costs will be prohibitive.

We know from decades of direct work with families that when essential supports become inaccessible, the consequences are profound. Children experience preventable medical deterioration. Families face increased crisis, isolation, and trauma. Health systems ultimately incur greater costs through emergency care and hospitalizations that could have been prevented through access to basic supports.

Equitable access to medically necessary care is foundational to Canada's commitments to human rights, disability inclusion, and the protection of vulnerable children. Refugee children and youth with disabilities must not face additional barriers to survival and well-being because of their immigration status or their family's financial circumstances.

Our model exists because families are often left to navigate fragmented and complex systems alone. We see firsthand the resilience of families, but we also see the profound harm that occurs when systems create additional barriers rather than removing them. These proposed IFHP changes will disproportionately impact children with disabilities and medical complexity and place already vulnerable families at significant risk.

We respectfully urge the Government of Canada to reconsider the introduction of copayments for prescriptions and supplemental services under the IFHP, particularly for children and individuals with disabilities and medical complexity. Access to essential medical supports must remain accessible, equitable, and grounded in the principles of dignity, inclusion, and care.

The Family Support Institute of BC stands ready to work collaboratively with the federal government and community partners to ensure that refugee children and families receive the supports necessary to live safely and fully in Canada.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Angela Clancy
Executive Director, Family Support Institute of BC

227 6th Street New Westminster, B.C., Canada V3L 3A5

 www.familysupportbc.com  Email: fsi@fsibc.com

Charity #: 105629497RR0001

 Tel: 604-540-8374

 Toll Free: 1-800-441-5403

As a provincial organization FSI acknowledges that our work spans across all the traditional, ancestral, and unceded Indigenous territories in BC. Therefore, we respectfully honour all First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, as well as their ancestors, who have lived here and cared for these lands. It is with gratitude that we can live, learn and do our work in the province now known as British Columbia.

