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July 25, 2023

Commissioner James Donelon
Louisiana Department of Insurance
P.O. Box 94214
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9214

Subject: **Public Hearing Letter of Support**

Dear Commissioner Donelon,

I hope this letter finds you well. On behalf of Acadian Ambulance Service, Inc and our employee owners, I would like to personally thank you for your years of service as our Insurance Commissioner. We have thoroughly enjoyed working with you and your staff through the years and wish you the very best.

I am reaching out to you today to respectfully submit our support of the proposed acquisition of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana (BCBSLA) by Elevance Health.

When I founded Acadian in 1971 in Lafayette, Louisiana my mission then as it is now, is to save as many lives as we can by improving healthcare in the state and providing access to as many people as possible. Our company serves over 70 parishes and counties in Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. In all of these areas, I am proud to say that we have built a very strong relationship with BCBSLA and their related companies, both as a provider in their network, and as a long-standing customer of theirs. We often work together at both the state and local level to improve the overall healthcare environment in our state. Last year, we transported approximately 715,000 patients by ground and 5,000 patients by air and we are 5,000+ employees strong.

As such, we are intimately aware of the market forces at play in health care, both in Louisiana and nationally, which are pushing all of us to develop new capabilities, products and services at an increasing pace and at an increasing cost. In that context, we believe that BCBSLA has made the right decision to find a partner that can assist them in not just staying strong, but in bringing new capabilities and innovative solutions to Louisiana at a pace and scope that they could not achieve on their own. The fact that Elevance Health has already invested more than \$4 billion in their whole health platform is a solid indication of their commitment to our state. As a large employer and customer of BCBSLA, we very much look forward to our employees benefiting from the tailored solutions, capabilities and services that we will have access to through BCBSLA when they become part of Elevance Health. Also, while we are very excited about how this will improve both the quality and affordability of the health care our employees receive, we are equally excited about how this will improve the lives of all beneficiaries of BCBSLA.

As a provider who believes that health care is best delivered locally, we are pleased to see that Elevance Health has committed to ensuring that BCBSLA maintain its strong local presence, local interactions and decision making with providers as well as with customers.

There is no doubt in our minds that BCBSLA will be better positioned to serve its members and policy holders, through improved quality and affordability of health care, as part of Elevance Health than if they were to continue on their own. Elevance brings with it new, innovative, and value-based payment models that will be enabled by the Elevance Health operating platform, along with better data sharing and integration.

Beyond that, the creation of *The Accelerate Louisiana Initiative*, a new foundation with a mission to improve the health and lives of the people of Louisiana, is an unprecedented opportunity for addressing the long challenging health status of our state. Our passionate commitment to improving health in our state makes it not only easy to support this merger but I would be remiss if I did not firmly state that actively supporting a stronger and more innovative BCBSLA combined with the introduction of a game changing foundation is not an opportunity that should pass us by.

We strongly value our partnership with BCBSLA. We both commend and support them for taking this proactive move to improve their company and the health of our state. We look forward to our continued partnership and being a part of the success story, we are sure will come, as a result of their reorganization and acquisition by Elevance Health.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R.E. Zuschlag". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Richard E. Zuschlag
CEO and Chairman of the Board

CC: David Caldwell
Executive Counsel
Louisiana Department of Insurance
P.O. Box 94214
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9214

I. Steven Udvarhelyi, M.D.
President and CEO
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana
5525 Reitz Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70809