



## IGNITE NOW: Take Action for Medicaid Toolkit

On Thursday, June 22, 2017, the United States Senate introduced the Better Care Reconciliation Act; its long-awaited proposal to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act/Obamacare. The plan is the Senate's answer to the House of Representatives, American Healthcare Act, which narrowly passed the chamber. If passed, this bill will have devastating effects on access to basic healthcare and Medicaid funded services and supports for America's most vulnerable populations: children, people with disabilities, seniors, and low income Americans. We need all hands on deck, especially if you live in **Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin!** Join us to tell Congress that Medicaid cuts and caps are dangerous and unacceptable!

### GENERAL TALKING POINTS

- **DO NOT cut, change or restructure Medicaid.**
- **Any change to the structure of Medicaid or cuts would impact individuals with autism.**
- **Program cuts, along with block grant or per capita cap proposals would hurt individuals with autism who have no alternative means of paying for essential services.**
- **These proposals will shift costs to states, beneficiaries and/or their families, and providers of services.**
- **States will have no choice other than to cut services and eligibility as they have fewer and fewer federal resources to address ongoing health needs for a growing and aging population, individuals with disabilities, and low-income communities.**
- **Changes to the funding structure of Medicaid could limit the availability of critical and cost-saving preventative care**
- **Medicaid provides critical health care services to children across the country in a variety of settings, including in schools.**
- **Do NOT allow states to opt out of requiring health plans to cover essential health care benefits**
- **DO NOT vote without a CBO score of the *final version* of the bill the Senate votes on and adequate time for Senators and the public to understand how it will affect the American people.**
- **Reject any bill that causes large coverage losses, ends the Medicaid expansion, caps and cuts the Medicaid program, or guts critical protections for people with health conditions.**

Share a personal impact story about how Medicaid enhances your quality of life and those you love.

## **BLOCK GRANTS**

Block grant is a funding structure that provides states with a set amount of federal money to fund its Medicaid program. A block grant would effectively end the flexible state and federal partnership. States would be responsible for covering the costs beyond the federal allotment. Deep cuts in federal spending on Medicaid and block grants would be a cost shift to already cash-strapped states. This may force states to reduce eligibility, limit services and supports, cut reimbursements to providers or cause substantial conflict as groups with diverse needs compete for scarce dollars.

## **PER CAPITA CAPS**

Due to the limited number of people who can get services through states' waiver programs, there are currently over 300,000 people with disabilities on waiting lists for home and community-based long-term services and supports across the country. The wait can be as long as 8-10 years. This crisis results in unnecessary, unwanted and costly institutional care; family members being forced to quit jobs or take on second jobs to help care for their loved one; and having to leave their loved ones unattended or in the care of unqualified persons.

## **MEDICAID STRUCTURE**

Any change to the structure of or cuts in funding to the Medicaid program would significantly impact individuals with autism. Medicaid provides a comprehensive set of benefits designed to meet the complex needs of people with disabilities. All state Medicaid programs must provide the following services that are of utmost importance to people with disabilities: physician and hospital services; Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) services for children with disabilities; and home health care services. In addition, state-run Medicaid programs have the flexibility to provide other services that are critical to people with disabilities including but not limited to: prescription drug coverage; rehabilitative and habilitative services; personal care services; durable medical equipment like wheelchairs, prosthetics, orthotics, and communication devices; and intensive community-based mental health services,

## **MEDICAID BENEFITS**

Medicaid beneficiaries are entitled to receive a variety of benefits under federal laws. States to offer a subset of mandatory benefits, and can also include optional benefits, at their discretion. Spending cuts to Medicaid jeopardizes a state's ability to offer optional benefits, which include home and community based waivers encompass. [Here](#) is a complete list of mandatory and optional benefits covered under the program.

## SAMPLE CALLING SCRIPT

***Call (202) 224-3121 and ask the switchboard operator to be connected to your Senator's office. Once connected, be sure to introduce yourself and identify yourself as a constituent. You can also find your senators' information [here](#).***

I am calling to tell Senator \_\_\_\_\_ to reject any plan that significantly cuts Medicaid and institutes a block grant or per capita caps. Such a proposal will have devastating effects on people with disabilities, especially those with autism. Medicaid provides healthcare services and long-term services and supports that maintain health, function, independence and the well-being of over 10 million with disabilities and their families, including mine. I urge Senator \_\_\_\_\_ to oppose any structural changes to Medicaid.

## SAMPLE LETTER

Dear [YOUR SENATOR]

I write today as part of the Autism Society of America's grassroots network, representing more than 3 million people on the autism spectrum and nearly 12 million family members to strongly oppose proposed changes to Medicaid in the Better Care Reconciliation Act. These changes would jeopardize services for the nation's most vulnerable people, particularly those with disabilities. We are urging the Senate to preserve the federal-state partnership that has made Medicaid a crucial safety net for them.

We are particularly opposed to curtailing the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act, which serves as a lifeline for millions of people with disabilities and many of their caregivers. We also oppose the creation of a per capita cap and the creation of the essential health benefits waiver, both set to take effect in 2020. Tight state budgets will not be able to make up for these changes, leading to a decline in services and supports for people with disabilities.

Restructuring Medicaid to a block grant or per capita cap could also have devastating effects on children, especially those with disabilities. Given the failure to commit federal resources to fully fund the IDEA, Medicaid reimbursement serves as a critical funding stream to help school provide the specialized instructional supports students with disabilities need to be educated with their peers. Moreover, Medicaid "carve-outs" exempting children with disabilities who qualify for Social Security Insurance from budget caps leaves the vast majority of kids with disabilities vulnerable since slashing the Medicaid budget ultimately forces states to reduce services or change eligibility requirements due to lack of funding.

Slashing federal support for Medicaid would force states to reduce eligibility and services, placing the health and well-being of people with disabilities at risk. We will not stand by and allow these cuts to

happen. They could lead to unintended consequences affecting millions of people with disabilities who seek to live as independently as possible in their communities.

The complex and far-reaching changes to Medicaid alone warrant increased transparency and additional legislative hearings, with greater public input. Please slow down and take into consideration the views of those who would be directly affected by these reductions. Will you commit that you will not vote without a CBO cost and coverage estimate for the bill you are actually voting on?

Sincerely,

## **SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGING**

*Tag your senators on social media and urge them to oppose cuts and caps to Medicaid. Use hashtags #SaveMedicaid and #Ignite4Autism to share stories about how Medicaid affects your life and the lives of your loved ones impacted by autism.*

### **TWEETS**

Schools rely on #Medicaid to comply with #IDEA. Tell your senators to #SaveMedicaid by calling 202-224-3121! #Ignite4Autism

Unpaid caregivers (like parents) save taxpayers \$450 billion a year. Cutting their support hurts everyone. #SaveMedicaid

Less funding = fewer options for people with disabilities and our families. #SaveMedicaid

#SaveMedicaid so people with #autism and other disabilities can live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives. #Ignite4Autism

#Medicaid caps would destroy the program in which people with disabilities rely for critical healthcare & community services. #SaveMedicaid

### **FACEBOOK**

Protect Medicaid from drastic cuts and structural changes, such as efforts to block grant or cap the program. Cuts to an already lean program will force states to make services and eligibility cuts that put the health and well-being of people with autism at significant risk. Call your Senators and today (202-224-3121) and urge them to #SaveMedicaid! #Ignite4Autism

Medicaid is the primary payer and the lifeline that millions of Americans depend on to care for their loved one with a disability. It currently covers 60 million low-income Americans, including individuals on the spectrum. Please VOTE NO to Medicaid cuts and restructuring!

Over 10 million people with disabilities and their families rely on the Medicaid program. It is the primary public source of funding for long-term services and supports. Call your Senators and today (202-224-3121) and urge them to protect Medicaid! #Ignite4Autism

Program cuts, along with block grant or per capita cap proposals would hurt people who have no alternative means of paying for essential services. Tell Congress (202-224-3121) to safeguard Medicaid and protect families with disabilities in need of long term supports and services.  
#Ignite4Autism