

#SAVEMEDICAIDUT



AHCA Could Have Deadly Consequences for Utah's Most Vulnerable

Save Medicaid Utah, a coalition whose members include AARP Utah, the Disability Law Center, Utah Family Voices, the Utah Health Policy Project, and Voices for Utah Children, has formed to advocate for preserving and strengthening Medicaid at a time when its viability is under attack in Congress. At stake is the health, well-being, and quality of life of over 320,000 individuals and working families in Utah – including more than 198,000 children, almost 16,000 seniors, and over 34,000 persons with disabilities.

“Medicaid supports our most vulnerable friends, neighbors, and family members,” says Micah Vorwaller, Health Policy Analyst and Legislative Counsel with the Utah Health Policy Project. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the American Health Care Act (AHCA) will cut \$880 billion from Medicaid over the next decade. As a result, some 14 million Americans will likely lose access to quality and affordable care over the same period. “With that size of a cut, many poor Utahns will undoubtedly lose coverage,” Vorwaller said. The House plans to vote on the legislation sometime tomorrow, March 23rd.

In addition to the cuts directly related to this drastic funding loss, the AHCA undermines the successful 50-year state and federal partnership underlying Medicaid. The partnership has meant that, in good times and bad, the federal government has covered about 2/3 of the cost of care for eligible Utahns. However, a Voices for Utah Children analysis found that, if the caps or block grants proposed in the bill had been in place for the last 10 years, Utah would be facing an estimated \$650 million shortfall today.

Such a prospect is especially scary for parents of the thousands of children who would lose their comprehensive benefits under the existing program. Gina Pola-Money, Director of Utah Family Voices, notes, “Many families of children with special health care needs have private health insurance but still have to utilize Medicaid for their unmet needs.” Similarly, Jessie Mandle, Senior Health Policy Analyst with Voices for Utah Children, emphasizes that, “Medicaid is the cornerstone of children’s health coverage; any cuts, block grants or caps will undermine the health and well-being of Utah children and families.”

Danny Harris, Associate State Director of Advocacy for AARP Utah, contends, “Providing a fixed amount of federal funding, as envisioned by the AHCA, could shift overwhelming costs to Utah taxpayers and families, who would be unable to shoulder the costs of care, harming some of Utah’s most vulnerable citizens at a time when their needs are increasing.” Faced with scarce resources and tough choices, the state may be tempted, or forced, to provide only bare-bones care to as few individuals as possible. Disability Law Center Public Policy Advocate, Andrew Riggle, worries, “We could see a rapid return to the dark days of mass institutionalization if services designed to help keep individuals in their home or community or be as independent as possible – like outpatient mental health care, group homes, in-home nursing, or personal care supports – disappear.”

Save Medicaid Utah encourages its constituencies to ask their representatives to oppose the AHCA, and to hold them accountable for their vote.

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