

Medicaid Matters to Wisconsin

Written by Disability Rights Wisconsin, Dan Idzikowski
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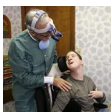
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The American Health Care Act passed in the House cuts \$839 billion from Medicaid, removes coverage from millions, and drastically alters healthcare protections for the rest. It would shift billions to Wisconsin taxpayers and does nothing to reduce health care costs, it only reduces the revenue available to pay them.

MILWAUKEE, WI - The House of Representatives voted last week to deliver Wisconsin citizens, including our most vulnerable adults and children, a multi-billion-dollar bill we cannot pay. The American Health Care Act (AHCA) initiates a \$839 billion cut to Medicaid, removes healthcare coverage from millions, and drastically alters healthcare protections for the rest. Most disturbing, rather than focusing on the promised replacement of the Affordable Care Act, the AHCA robs a quarter of the Medicaid budget to pay for tax changes that will benefit only the wealthiest Americans.

Medicaid funds far more than medical insurance for the poor. In Wisconsin, forty percent of Medicaid funds support popular and innovative programs like Family Care, IRIS, and Community Options that keep older adults and people with disabilities in their homes and out of expensive institutions, supporting them to work, volunteer, and contribute to the economy.



Medicaid funds HealthCheck, ensuring babies and children get the early care and treatment they need. Medicaid funds Katie Beckett, the Children's Long Term Support program, and special education services that support families of all incomes with children with significant disabilities. Medicaid funds mental health services, addiction treatment, and BadgerCare, providing health care security for low-income working adults. For nearly 1.2 million Wisconsinites, Medicaid matters.

Medicaid is an investment in Wisconsin's economy. With access to healthcare, Wisconsinites can avoid illness and manage chronic conditions, keeping them working. Family caregivers can keep their jobs instead of being forced to leave to care for family members. Tens of thousands

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of Wisconsin jobs and our healthcare infrastructure are supported by Medicaid.

Wisconsin now receives 59 cents from the federal government for every dollar it invests in Medicaid. It invests those dollars efficiently. By selectively expanding coverage and moving to a statewide managed care system for adults with disabilities and the frail elderly, Wisconsin has saved tens of millions of dollars in more expensive hospital and institutional care.

Under the Affordable Care Act, nearly a quarter of a million more Wisconsinites have health insurance. In fact, Milwaukee won an award for the highest increase in coverage. This has benefitted Wisconsin's economy. Hospital based uncompensated care costs have decreased by \$500 million dollars from 2013 to 2015, lowering hospital costs and reducing cost shifting.



In contrast, Wisconsin stands to be one of the AHCA's biggest losers. The AHCA will cap future federal payments based upon 2016 state Medicaid spending. In 2016, Wisconsin underspent its Medicaid budget by \$312 million, refused Medicaid expansion funds, and had the lowest per capita spending on children in the nation. Worse, any attempt by Wisconsin to make up the "difference" will be met by a dollar-for-dollar reduction in federal funding. That is not flexibility – that is an unfunded mandate to reduce coverage, care, and support for our most vulnerable citizens.

The AHCA would shift billions of costs to Wisconsin, cause thousands to lose coverage, and pass on to Wisconsinites the hard decisions about waiting lists, terminations, and rationed care for our most vulnerable citizens. Nothing in the AHCA addresses the actual drivers of health care costs – it only reduces the revenue available to pay them.

It's time for Wisconsin – and the United States Senate -- to recognize the value of Medicaid and the ACA to its people, the economy, and our State. We can't afford any less.

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Learn more about Dan and Disability Rights Wisconsin on their website at <http://www.disabilityrightswi.org/>