



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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U.S. House Approves Health Care Bill that Harms People with Disabilities

The U.S. House of Representatives voted Thursday to approve a devastating 25% cut to federal Medicaid funding and to rollback health care protections for people with pre-existing conditions. These changes, which are part of the American Health Care Act (AHCA), will reduce health care access for Wisconsin's disability community.

"A cut to federal Medicaid funding is a cut to the Wisconsin programs that help people with disabilities get out of bed in the morning, go to school, work and lead independent lives in the community," said Survival Co-Chair Beth Swedeen. "The cuts approved by the U.S. House today jeopardize the progress Wisconsin has made over the past 20 years in transitioning people with disabilities out of institutional settings and into the community."

Federal Medicaid funding supports 20 Wisconsin programs that provide critical health and long-term care services to more than 1 million Wisconsinites like Family Care, IRIS, BadgerCare, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, the Children's Long Term Support Program, Comprehensive Community Services, intensive in-home autism supports, and school-based services like speech, occupational and physical therapies. Children, older adults and people with disabilities make up two-thirds of Wisconsin's Medicaid enrollment.

"The changes approved by the House shift costs to state taxpayers and will require Wisconsin to make tough choices when it comes to funding its current Medicaid programs," said Survival Co-Chair Maureen Ryan. "Wisconsin is on track to end the waiting lists for its children and adult long-term care programs, but federal Medicaid cuts will make it difficult to keep that promise over time."

"Wisconsin is already experiencing provider shortages in several key areas like personal care, dental care and mental health, and federal funding cuts could lead to rate cuts which will only make these issues worse," said Survival Co-Chair Lisa Pugh.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office analysis of the AHCA clearly states that cuts to federal Medicaid funding will require states to decide whether to "commit more of their own resources to finance the program at current-law levels" or find ways to reduce spending by "cutting payments to health care providers and health plans, eliminating optional services, restricting eligibility for enrollment."

A last-minute amendment to the AHCA includes the rollback of key consumer protections created by the Affordable Care Act. The version of the bill passed by the House allows states to charge people with pre-existing conditions more for their health care and lets health insurance plans stop providing Essential Health Benefits like prescription drugs, speech, physical and occupational therapies, and mental health and substance use disorder treatments.

“Allowing states to get waivers from the community rating provision and Essential Health Benefits means that people with disabilities are no longer guaranteed access to needed services on the private health insurance market,” said Survival Co-Chair Kit Kerschensteiner. “Under the AHCA, important coverage decisions will be left up to individual states, resulting in a patchwork system that offers inconsistent coverage of important therapies and medical devices.”

The Survival Coalition calls on the U.S. Senate to oppose the harmful cuts to Medicaid and rollback of protections for people with pre-existing conditions in the American Health Care Act.

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