Massive Medicaid Cuts Potentially Devastating for Utahns with Disabilities, Older Adults and Kids

The House Republicans' recent proposal, the American Health Care Act, undermines the existing guarantees of Medicaid (guarantees which have been in place for over 50 years) and puts the health of many Utahns at risk. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that 24 million Americans could lose quality and affordable coverage over the next decade, including 14 million Americans losing access to care as a result of the $880 billion in cuts to Medicaid contained in the recently released American Health Care Act.

Equally worrisome is the idea of a per capita cap in Medicaid. For close to 50 years, the program has been a partnership between the states and Washington D.C. For every $1 Utah pays, the federal government contributes about $2.36 toward the cost of most services. Right now, states must cover certain services such as hospital stays, doctor visits, and nursing home care. They can choose to offer other services like prescription drugs, mental health care, or home and community-based services.

Under the House majority proposal, states would be given a slightly different total amount of money for each enrollee (depending on whether they are a child, adult, individual who is aging, or a person with a disability). The amount would be adjusted a little each year. However, it is unlikely to keep pace with inflation or actual costs.

If a state is able to cover the cost of care for individuals in a category within the amount given, it may be able to keep some or all of the savings. However, if the cost of care for individuals in a category is greater than the funding provided, a state would likely be on the hook for the difference. Faced with limited resources and tough choices, a state may be tempted, or forced, to provide only the required services to as few individuals as allowed.

Many of the services and supports individuals with disabilities rely on to be active, productive and contributing members of their communities are relatively expensive. Unfortunately, most of them are also optional, and do not have to be provided now, to say nothing of the future. Therefore, our major fear, among many, is that a large number of persons with significant disabilities will eventually have no choice but to enter a nursing home or other facility in order to get the care they need.

To learn more about what these possible changes may mean for Utahns with disabilities, please join us for a free webinar this Thursday, March 16 at 10 AM. To register, visit this link. For more information, please see our fact sheet.

The Disability Law Center is a private non-profit organization. The DLC’s mission is to enforce and strengthen laws that protect the opportunities, choices and legal rights of Utahns with disabilities. Our services are available statewide and free of charge, regardless of income, legal status, language, or place of residence.

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