



PUBLIC POLICY COLLABORATION



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March 26, 2003

Dear Senator:

On behalf of persons with mental retardation, cerebral palsy and related developmental disabilities and their families, we are writing to urge you to inform Senate conferees that you strongly oppose cuts to Medicaid in the final Budget Resolution. Further, we ask that you oppose the final budget resolution if it contains cuts in Medicaid funding.

Medicaid is fundamental to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of the children and adults we represent, many of whom have no voice. In 2000, more than 44.2 million Americans received services through Medicaid, including nearly 7.5 million people with disabilities.

Health care, and long term services and supports, including community-based services, provided by Medicaid are among the most important ways that the nation demonstrates that it values all of its residents. Medicaid services help to keep people healthy and enable individuals to lead personally enriching lives by contributing to the communities around them. In addition to physician, hospital and clinic services, and prescription services, Medicaid provides a vital—and sometimes the only—funding source for critical long term services and supports.

A provision of the Medicaid program, called Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT), ensures that children in Medicaid receive regular health screenings, and when problems are diagnosed, treatment services are provided. In 1998, roughly 8.7 million children (from birth to age 20) in the United States received at least one EPSDT screening. In the same year, more than 1.4 million children were referred for corrective treatment.

These services prevent and minimize disability by intervening early. For children with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and related developmental disabilities, this critical Medicaid benefit can make a huge difference in people's lives. This early investment in children can save money by enabling children to maximize their development and educational attainment—minimizing the need to receive life-long services

For people with a variety of physical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, or amputations, Medicaid usually is the only way

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they can get access to durable medical equipment like wheelchairs or prosthetic devices, as well as assistive technology.

Unlike private health insurance coverage, the benefits provided by Medicaid address the major issues and challenges facing people with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and related disabilities. In particular, Medicaid provides coverage for long term services that are rarely provided by most private health insurance programs. These services include residential living in people's own homes so that families can stay together, as well as facility-based services. Long-term care services also include a range of rehabilitative and habilitative services that help people to maximize their independence. These services include: speech, language and hearing services, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. Medicaid also provides for home health services and personal care services that help individuals to perform activities of daily living, such as dressing and feeding oneself.

For the people who rely on them, these services are not an option, they are a necessity. Medicaid works for millions of people. There is no other safety net for their health, wellbeing, and long term support. We strongly urge you to support the Medicaid beneficiaries in your state by informing conferees and Senate leadership that you will oppose the budget resolution if it includes cuts to the Medicaid program.

Sincerely,

Lynne Cleveland
The Arc of the United States

Leon Triest
United Cerebral Palsy

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