



Letters to the Editor

Letter to the Editor - Medicaid cuts will devastate Families and Workers

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As certain elected officials in Washington consider cuts to the Medicaid Program, there's little substantive conversation about the impact it would have on a very vulnerable demographic – people living with developmental disabilities, along with those who care for them.

The Arc/Morris Chapter serves more than 800 people with disabilities and their families, including 140 supported 24 hours a day in community-based residences. I know how fragile our care system can be and how disastrous even the most modest cuts would be.

Many of our families count on Medicaid-funded day programs for their adult children with disabilities. These programs allow parents to work, and keeps families economically independent. Cuts to these programs could force parents to stop working, with many turning to other social safety net programs to get by. Individuals receiving residential services could see a real decline in the daily support they rely on to live safely in the community.

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Also of grave concern are Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who provide the care. They are already paid very low wages due to our reliance on Medicaid. Most of them are earning very low wages in a career where professionally trained staff are needed 24 hours a day.

It is difficult to continually attract and retain DSPs who need extensive training for a physically and emotionally draining job. We already struggle to keep standards high and care consistent. Even less funds would mean fewer staff, which could mean serving fewer families.

New Jersey is currently shifting most of the funding to support people with developmental disabilities to Medicaid. Now those funds are vulnerable and the potential for serious problems are great as that funding is threatened.

If federal dollars are cut, near-impossible decisions will have to be made to address competing interests for a much smaller piece of the pie – including the one that serves those with developmental disabilities.

Especially at this time of year, our leaders in Washington need to understand that indisputable fact.

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