



For immediate release on 5/22/23:

Say NO to Medicaid Work Requirements

Medicaid is by far the biggest payer for long-term care in the country, covering more than half the combined cost of nursing home care and long-term care at home. As such, Medicaid is a vital lifeline for many well spouses, whether we are already poor enough to be Medicaid-eligible or still spending down what remains of our financial resources.

It is therefore truly alarming that on April 26, the House of Representatives narrowly passed a bill that would—among many other bad things—impose onerous new work requirements on Medicaid beneficiaries, in exchange for raising the Federal debt ceiling. Under the House-passed bill, all Medicaid beneficiaries between the ages of 19 and 55 would be obligated to meet an 80 hour per month work requirement, unless they are covered by an exemption. This work requirement would be imposed not just on future beneficiaries, but on the millions of current Medicaid enrollees too. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that imposition of work requirements would kick enough people off Medicaid to trigger a \$109 billion cut in Medicaid spending over the next ten years, causing 1.5 million people to lose their Medicaid coverage and 600,000 to become completely uninsured.

These Medicaid work requirements reportedly are on the table in high stakes negotiations to tie an increase in the Federal debt ceiling to deep cuts in and restricted eligibility for a wide array of vital social programs. If they don't get their way, those who demand the cuts are adamant that the Federal debt ceiling will not be increased. If the debt ceiling is not increased, the Federal government will be forced to default on its debt for the first time in U.S. history, with unpredictable but potentially catastrophic economic consequences.

The House-passed bill includes exemptions from the work requirement for people who are “physically or mentally unfit for employment” and for caregivers who are

caring for an “incapacitated person.” But before you breathe a sigh of relief, please be aware that—far from mitigating the harm from work requirements—these and other vaguely worded exemptions will cause a host of new problems, resulting in unjust termination of Medicaid coverage for many current beneficiaries.

Disability policy experts are sounding the alarm that the “physically or mentally unfit for employment” exemption from the proposed Medicaid work requirement is an unworkable bureaucratic nightmare that would be hugely burdensome to Medicaid beneficiaries and the 50 states that will be required to administer it. Far from increasing work effort, in a paradoxical twist the proposed exemption would likely trigger withdrawal from the labor force by many Medicaid recipients. That’s because people with disabilities who might otherwise want to work—and who already face tremendous barriers to doing so—would ask their doctors to certify that they are “physically or mentally unfit for employment,” rather than risk losing their Medicaid. Not surprisingly, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office concludes that the proposed Medicaid work requirements “would have a negligible effect on employment status or hours worked by people who would be subject to the work requirements.”

Of particular concern to well spouses, the work requirement exemption for caregivers who give care to an “incapacitated person” is “vague, subjective, crude, and could extremely limit the definition of caregivers,” according to David Goldfarb, Director of Long-Term Supports and Services Policy at The Arc of the United States. The net result of imposing work requirements on Medicaid recipients will be chaos, needless administrative burden and widespread denial of badly needed care to many of the most vulnerable people in our society—no doubt including some of our members and their ill partners and spouses.

Please take action now. Call, e-mail and/or write your two Senators and your Representative—and also contact the White House. Tell everyone you contact that you are a spousal or partner caregiver, and you oppose Medicaid work requirements—or any other cuts to Medicaid. The imposition of Medicaid work requirements should NOT be part of any deal to increase the Federal debt ceiling.

If you need help finding your Representative, enter your zip code here:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>.

If you need help finding your Senators or how to contact them, start here:

<https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm?Class=1>.

To send a message to the White House, go here:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>.