



Survival Coalition

of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Survival Coalition Statement on Senate Health Care Vote

The Survival Coalition thanks the U.S. Senators who voted early Friday to reject changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Previous versions of their bill had also included massive cuts to Medicaid that would have led to millions of Americans losing access to health insurance and critical supports that keep them in their homes and communities. Survival Coalition urges Congress to move forward now in addressing the actual cost drivers in our health care system that have led to high premiums, and engage in thoughtful discussions with stakeholders before making any changes to Medicaid.

“These changes were developed without stakeholder input and were never given a public hearing despite the significant impact they would have on the lives of people with disabilities and older adults,” said Survival Co-Chair Beth Swedeen.

Major cuts to federal Medicaid funding were debated throughout the health care reform process and included in nearly every bill released by the Senate and House. Two-thirds of federal Medicaid funding is spent on people with disabilities and older adults. 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.

“People with disabilities and older adults were not protected from the proposed cuts to Medicaid—they would have been subject to the same harsh caps on funding that would apply to all other Medicaid enrollees,” said Survival Co-Chair Maureen Ryan.

Survival Coalition was greatly concerned that Wisconsin would have been disadvantaged by the proposed Medicaid funding structure. None of the proposals acknowledged the significant cost-savings that Wisconsin has already realized through our successful long-term care system. Wisconsin would have received less funding than states that currently spend more money because of inefficient models.

“The changes approved by the House and proposed by the Senate in the Better Care Reconciliation Act would shift costs to state taxpayers and require Wisconsin to make tough choices when it comes to funding its current Medicaid programs,” said Survival Co-Chair Kit

Kerschensteiner . “Wisconsin is on track to end the waiting lists for its children and adult long-term care programs, but federal Medicaid cuts would make it difficult to keep that promise over time.”

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office analysis of both the House and Senate proposals clearly stated that their cuts to federal Medicaid funding would require states to decide whether to spend more state taxpayer dollars on Medicaid or enact cost-saving measures like cutting payments to providers, eliminating services and restricting eligibility.

“Wisconsin is a national model for providing home and community-based services for people with disabilities and older adults, but the proposals put forward over the last several months would have penalized us for our innovation,” said Survival Co-Chair Lisa Pugh. “Going forward, Congress should look to Wisconsin for ideas on how to enact positive Medicaid reforms that lead to more people living and working in the community.”

The Survival Coalition calls on Congress to work on a bi-partisan health reform bill to stabilize the health insurance marketplace. Any proposed bills should go through a robust committee and stakeholder input process.

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