

Medicaid Is US: Why Medi-Cal Matters in Northern California

By Elizabeth Gibboney

Medicaid is the backbone of health coverage for more than 74 million Americans, with nearly 20 million of them receiving services through Safety Net Health Plans such as Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC). Medicaid is not a distant program that benefits any one group of people – it helps Americans across all demographics – racially, economically, and generationally. *Medicaid is us.*

In California, Medicaid is known as Medi-Cal, and more than 570,000 individuals in 14 Northern California counties receive their Medi-Cal coverage through PHC. They are our members. They are your friends, your relatives, and your neighbors. Mine, too. They are you. They are us.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Senate is readying to vote on a counterproductive gutting of Medicaid proposed under the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA). The BCRA moves America's health care system, and our entire economy, in a dangerous and harmful direction. The Senate bill will phase out Medicaid coverage for millions of Americans and threatens the viability of the Medicaid system through underfunded per capita allotments.

Medicaid benefits working Americans. Almost 60 percent of adults with Medicaid coverage are already working. Nearly half of them work for small businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Medicaid is essential for hardworking Americans to keep their jobs. Medicaid helps people manage their chronic illnesses – so they can keep working. It is critical to supporting drug rehabilitation programs to counter the opioid epidemic – so these people can get well, and get back to work. Nearly two-thirds of older and disabled Americans rely on Medicaid to help pay for nursing homes and care, lifting a burden off family members – so they can continue to work.

In the 14-county region where PHC serves Medi-Cal recipients, we see evidence of the benefits of Medicaid for people from all walks of life. Medi-Cal is crucial to the people of northeastern California, particularly Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, and Siskiyou counties.

- PHC provides care for more than 87,600 people in these counties, which means approximately 1 in 3 residents of the four-county area have Medi-Cal.
- Of those 87,600 individuals, nearly 33,000 are age 19 or younger and more than 6,200 are age 65 or over.
- The repeal of the Medi-Cal Expansion, as proposed in the BCRA, directly threatens health care to approximately 24,000 people in the region.

We at PHC have seen the benefits of the Affordable Care Act, and the Medi-Cal Expansion. Not only did the expansion extend vital health care coverage to thousands, it also served as an economic engine in the rural communities we serve. A repeal of the Medi-Cal Expansion would have dire economic impact in Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, and Siskiyou counties, including:

- The loss of \$120.5 million in state and federal revenue to deliver Medi-Cal benefits



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- The loss of \$218.8 million in business revenue.
- The loss of approximately 1,300 jobs in the four-county region.

At PHC, we joined a campaign called Medicaid is US because we felt a moral obligation to the patients we serve that they maintain access to quality, affordable health care. But we also feel a responsibility to make this case in a civil and dignified manner that respects legitimate differences of opinion about health care policy in America. Name-calling and finger-pointing gain us nothing. That is why we have focused on the impact of Medicaid on quality health care, job creation, and economic well-being. At every point in our lives, Medicaid is there to ensure that we and our loved ones have the health security they need to maintain their economic security. Medicaid belongs to everyone and benefits everyone. In this debate, there is no us and them. There is only us.

For more information and to voice your opposition to the BCRA, go to medicaidisus.org.

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