



## Dialing Down Federal Medicaid Dollars: Florida Seniors Will be Hurt

The U.S. Senate is on a path to fundamentally restructuring Medicaid by capping and cutting funding. This will shift enormous costs to the state, and lawmakers are unlikely to make up the difference with state funds. The health of Florida seniors will be at risk.

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A recent Florida Policy Institute report<sup>1</sup> underscores how Florida's most vulnerable, including seniors, will be hurt by the American Health Care Act – the reform proposal passed by the U.S. House.

As the Senate considers its own version of health reform, including proposals to cap and cut federal Medicaid funding, Florida policymakers must keep in mind Florida's unique demographics, highlighted in a recent Department of Elder Affairs fact sheet<sup>2</sup>:

- Florida ranks first in the nation in residents aged 65+
- More than 1.6 million Floridians are aged 75+
- The 100+ population is the fastest growing age group by percentage
- More than 510,000 individuals in Florida live with Alzheimer's

Like the U.S. House, the U.S. Senate is on a very swift, non-transparent trajectory to pass a bill. Proposals to cap and cut Medicaid are in the works. Remarkably, this legislation is believed to include the ability for the federal government to “dial down” the cap any time it needs to extract more savings at Florida's expense.

Medicaid has been a critical safety net for seniors since 1965, providing flexible federal funding to help meet the growing needs of Florida's aging population. Notably, over 800,000 low income Medicare beneficiaries in Florida receive Medicaid to cover critical services not covered by Medicare.<sup>3</sup> This includes dental and vision care, as well as long-term services like nursing home care, and in-home assistance and support services. Medicaid also covers monthly Medicare premiums and cost-sharing, saving elderly Floridians thousands of dollars per year.

What will capped Medicaid funding mean for seniors' continued access to these vital health and long-term care services? This key question is addressed in a recent blog<sup>4</sup> by the Georgetown Center for Children and Families:

“Done in the face of demographic changes that will dramatically increase the number of elderly Americans needing costly long-term care services that Medicare does not pay, this is called a historic, game-changing cost shift. Why? Are the states in a better position to absorb this cost shift now than they were in 1965?”

Florida certainly is not. Not now, over the next decade or in perpetuity- which is precisely where the Senate is going with Medicaid “cap and cut” proposals.

Low- and moderate-income Florida seniors, who have worked a lifetime but exhausted their personal savings to cover inevitable “aging” health care costs, count on Medicaid to survive.

Letting the federal government extract more Medicaid “savings” at the expense of seniors is not the right policy choice for Florida.

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<sup>1</sup> Dadi, Esubalew, American Health Care Act Threatens Access to Coverage for Millions of Florida Seniors and Adults with Disabilities, Florida Policy Institute, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> DOEA 2017 Fact Sheet, Florida Department of Elder Affairs. Accessed via: [http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/pubs/pubs/DOEA\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/pubs/pubs/DOEA_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Finn, Brendan, Fact Sheet: Florida, Changing Medicaid to a Block Grant of Per Capita Cap Could Hurt Floridians, pp. 1-2, AARP Public Policy Institute, 2017. Accessed via: [http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2017-01/LTSS%20Fact%20Sheets%203.1.17/AARP1123\\_FS\\_Florida\\_Feb28.pdf](http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2017-01/LTSS%20Fact%20Sheets%203.1.17/AARP1123_FS_Florida_Feb28.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Schneider, Andy, Capping Federal Medicaid Payments to States: Four Questions to Consider, Georgetown Center for Children and Families, 2017. Accessed via: <http://ccf.georgetown.edu/2017/05/09/capping-federal-medicaid-payments-to-states-four-questions/>