

Trust

Alaska Mental Health
Trust Authority



SAVE MEDICAID – Contact Your U.S. Senators!

The United States Senate in Washington D.C. is getting ready to vote on the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA), a bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare.

Draft BCRA bill text: <https://www.budget.senate.gov/bettercare>

Background on the U.S. Senate's "Better Care Reconciliation Act" (BCRA)

The BCRA recommends deep cuts and caps to the Medicaid program, and would massively shift costs to states, which will be forced to either raise taxes and/or severely restrict access to services that help disabled people live and work in the community.

Medicaid is health insurance for people with disabilities, low-income, seniors, children, and others. It is a federal program delivered by the states.

Medicaid provides health insurance to 74 million low-income children, pregnant women, adults, seniors, and people with disabilities in the United States.

The BCRA phases out enhanced federal funding for Medicaid expansion (2021-2023), and enhanced funding ends in 2024.

The BCRA makes additional cuts to Medicaid over and above the health care bill passed by the U.S. House, including:

- Converting Medicaid to a per capita cap with state option for block grant for non-disabled, non-expansion, non-elderly adults, low income parents, and pregnant women
- Reducing the per capita cap trend rate to CPI in 2025 and beyond
- Extending cuts for Medicaid expansion states even after enhanced expansion funding is eliminated
- Reducing the allowable provider tax threshold

See Fact Sheet: "Medicaid in the United States": <http://files.kff.org/attachment/fact-sheet-medicaid-state-US>

Background on Medicaid in Alaska

Alaska has more than 185,000 individuals enrolled, about one in four Alaskans, and nearly half of those enrolled are children.

As of May 2017, Medicaid enrollees in Alaska:

- 5% (8,070 people) are aged
- 8% (14,871 people) have disabilities
- 48% (88,915 people) are children

- 20% (36,883 people) are other adults
- 18% (33,945 people) expansion adults

More than 50% of the costs associated with Medicaid are for Alaskans who experience disabilities and the aged. Medicaid is the key funding source for these vulnerable Alaskans.

Nearly 34,000 expansion adults could lose coverage, and the remaining children, seniors, people with disabilities, and other adults covered by Medicaid are at increased risk for cuts.

If the BCRA becomes law, it would have the biggest and most devastating impact on health and community services for people with disabilities in 25 years.

Alaska is expected to lose \$3.1 billion in federal Medicaid funds between federal FY20 and FY26 from the expansion-related changes and the per capita cap. This amounts to 28% of Alaska’s current law federal Medicaid funding.

To stay under the cap, Alaska will need to cut Medicaid spending by \$632 million (federal and state dollars) between 2020 and 2026. Reductions double between 2024 and 2026—and would continue to deepen.

These estimates reflect that individuals who use Indian Health Service (IHS) or Tribal facility services and disabled children are excluded from the cap. In practice, however, rate reductions, benefit cuts and other changes Alaska makes to stay under the cap would adversely affect them.

Eight in ten Medicaid enrollees were in working households in 2015. Medicaid is a primary source of health insurance for the working poor.

How You Can Help:

Contact your Alaska U.S. Senators:

NOTE: If you are in Wrangell on the 4th of July, consider meeting Senator Lisa Murkowski in person at one of the community events.

Or contact both senators directly at:

- **U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski:**
 - Call: (202) 224-6665
 - Email by going here: <https://www.murkowski.senate.gov/contact/email>
- **U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan**
 - Call: (202) 224-3004
 - Email by going here: <https://www.sullivan.senate.gov/contact/email>

You can email, call, visit, or send messages using social media.

Showing up in-person or sending photos and a 2-3 paragraph story of how the ACA and/or Medicaid has helped are especially effective ways to advocate.

It’s important for Alaska’s U.S. Senators to hear from their own constituents about why Medicaid is important for providing essential health care and other critical supports to people with disabilities and their families.

Suggested Talking Points:

- I live in Alaska and I am your constituent.
- I am a person with a disability or I am a family member of someone with a disability or I am a professional in the disability field.

- Do NOT repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) without an open and transparent process that allows your constituents to weigh in on the final bill. The impact on my healthcare and life is too important!
- Do NOT repeal the ACA without a replacement that maintains or improves coverage and protections!
- Do NOT allow restructuring and cuts to Medicaid to be part of an ACA replacement!
- The ACA and Medicaid has helped me/my family member to have health care and community based services because it has provided [list examples of health services that have helped you/your family member remain stable and in the community, and out of expensive hospital or institutional care].
- This bill massively shifts costs to states, which will be forced to either raise taxes and/or severely restrict access to services that help disabled people live and work in the community.
- Congress should work in a bipartisan manner to support health care that is comprehensive, accessible, and affordable.

Message #1: Do NOT cut and cap Medicaid!

Medicaid is a partnership between the federal and state governments with matching state and federal funds. Under a Medicaid per capita cap, the federal government would set a limit on how much to reimburse states based on enrollment in the Medicaid program. Unlike current law, funding would not be based on the actual cost of providing services. The intent of the per capita caps is to restructure the program and save money for the federal government, which will inevitably lead to cuts in funding to the states.

Negative impacts for Medicaid recipients could include:

- Losing home and community-based services and supports.
- Waiting lists would quickly grow.
- Losing other critical services such as personal care, mental health, prescription drugs, and rehabilitative services.
- Shifting the costs to individuals or family members to make up for the cuts in federal funding. The costs of providing health care and long term services and supports will not go away, but will be shifted to individuals, parents, states, and providers.

Message #2: Do not repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA)

- The ACA is the most significant law for people with disabilities since the Americans with Disabilities Act:
- Because of the ACA, health insurers can't deny health insurance or charge higher premiums if you have a disability or chronic condition.
- Because of the ACA, there aren't arbitrary financial limits to how much health care you can get in a year or in your lifetime.
- Because of the ACA, more people with disabilities and chronic health conditions are able to access health care due to the Medicaid expansion.

Resources:

- Impact on Alaska of Medicaid Provisions in the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA) from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services:
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/News/Documents/press/2017/impactBCRA.pdf>

- [ASAN's toolkit](#) on basic civic engagement for self-advocates
- Center for Public Representation's Medicaid website: <https://medicaid.publicrep.org/> (Messaging, key states to target, and more)
- Consortium for Citizen's with Disabilities Protect the ACA and Medicaid website: <http://c-c-d.org/rubriques.php?rubpage=42>
- Medicaid Fact Sheets: <http://www.kff.org/interactive/medicaid-state-fact-sheets/>