Keep Illinois Medicaid Strong: Principles for Financial Stability

The Illinois Medicaid program provides life-saving health coverage to nearly 2.7 million low-income children, parents, seniors, and people with disabilities and behavioral health needs, including addiction and mental illness. However, the program faces a $2.7 billion deficit this year, and legislators are exploring a range of solutions. We all need to ask: How much does each of these “solutions” actually cost us in health and long-term care outcomes and state funds? Our organizations endorse the following principles for stabilizing the Illinois Medicaid program.

Solutions such as cutting prescription drug coverage, eligibility, or optional services are unacceptable and will drive up long-term state costs. The services people on Medicaid receive now reduce future state health spending by providing prevention services and early intervention.

Transformative Medicaid reforms are being implemented but need time to work. To improve the health and lives of Medicaid recipients while reducing costs, Illinois is contracting with commercial managed care companies and networks of providers to implement robust care coordination models. However, these programs cannot be in place overnight.

The General Assembly and Governor have underfunded Medicaid for 20 years; a multi-year solution is needed to balance the program budget. Medicaid reforms enacted in 2011 already establish a decade-long glide path to pay old bills, and this plan should be followed.

The Medicaid budget cannot be balanced with Medicaid cuts alone. New revenue and savings from legislative changes in other budget areas must be applied to Medicaid. Medicaid cannot be firewalled from the rest of the state budget; it is an economic engine that supports families, creates jobs, and helps children learn.

Supporters (as of 4/16/12)
AARP Illinois
Access Living
AgeOptions
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
American Cancer Society, Illinois Division
Campaign for Better Health Care
Chicago ADAPT
Citizen Action Illinois
CJE SeniorLife
Doctors Council SEIU
Haymarket Center
Health and Disability Advocates
Health and Medicine Policy Research Group
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
IL Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association
IL Alliance for Retired Americans
IL Association of Public Health Administrators
IL Association of Rehabilitation Facilities
IL Chiropractic Society
IL Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
IL Iowa Center for Independent Living
IL Maternal and Child Health Coalition
IL Partners for Human Service
IL Primary Health Care Association
IL Public Health Association
IL Society for Advanced Practice Nursing
ILSargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
IL Valley Center for Independent Living
Impact CIL
Latino Policy Forum
National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities
New Age Services
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Planned Parenthood of Illinois
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
SEIU Healthcare Illinois Indiana
SEIU Illinois Council
SEIU Local 73
Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois

For more information or to sign on, contact Ramon Gardenhire, rgardenhire@aidschicago.org, (301) 379-3024.