



Interfaith: restructuring of Medicaid will cause irreversible harm

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Beware Arizona. The potential restructuring of Medicaid, as approved by the House and undergoing secretive deliberations in the Senate, will cause irreversible harm.

Close to 500,000 Arizonans will lose health care coverage, endangering lives and undermining an open public process.

As clergy leaders with the Arizona Interfaith Network, we are profoundly concerned that the proposed changes under the American Health Care Act would affect virtually every dimension of family life, especially for middle and lower income families.



From caring for people in our congregations, we know that Medicaid saves lives.

The Senate is now eyeing cuts that will jeopardize Arizona's ability to provide health care to children, seniors, and people with disabilities. The Congressional Budget Office analysis clearly paints the picture, and the numbers are staggering: over 400,000 adults and 78,000 children who recently gained coverage through Medicaid Expansion, will lose it.

The proposed changes will jettison protections that undermine health and economic well-being: early childhood and education services, including special education services in public schools, school-based health care services, and even school nurses; home and community-based programs that allow seniors and persons with disabilities to stay in their homes and communities and out of nursing facilities; access to health care for those in rural areas who tend to be poorer and sicker than the rest of the state's population; treatment services for people with mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

The latter is often the only recourse for victims of the state's opioid addiction crisis.

The cuts won't just affect the uninsured. Proposed limitations, called caps, on Medicaid funding would blow a hole in Arizona's budget. A recent Urban Institute analysis shows that the proposal effectively would deny Arizona \$19 billion over a 10-year period, jeopardizing other vital state

programs that families count on, such as public education, public safety, workforce development and transportation.

This would throw our state's health care sector into chaos, threatening the survival of rural hospitals, wiping out jobs and leaving entrepreneurs and small business at high risk.

We call upon Senators Flake and McCain to do all they can to address the draconian effects of the House bill. We call upon the entire Senate to openly deliberate this monumental shift in health policy and be accountable to their constituents.

Most importantly, we urge all Arizonans to reach out today to our elected leaders. This decision could soon be out of our reach if we do not respond to our senators and congressional members now. It is time for a serious public consideration, true reform that gives the highest priority to the needs of families and the most vulnerable.

Editor's note: the Rev. Martha Seaman is an Episcopal Diocese of Arizona deacon. John Linder is senior rabbi of Temple Solel in Paradise Valley. Rev. Elwood McDowell is pastor at Trinity Missionary Baptist Church in Tucson. Rev. Miguel Gomez-Acosta is assistant to the Bishop for the Grand Canyon Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.