

Statement of Principles: Protecting Florida's Medicaid Program

January 2025

We represent multiple organizations who believe that healthcare is a human right, and we are committed to protecting Floridians' access to healthcare. We stand firmly opposed to proposed federal cuts to Medicaid and affirm the vital importance of this program for millions of Floridians. Our position is grounded in the following core principles:

Medicaid is Foundational for the Wellbeing of Florida's Most Vulnerable Residents

Medicaid provides essential healthcare coverage to Florida's most vulnerable residents. Approximately 4.2 million Floridians currently rely on Medicaid for their healthcare coverage.¹ Due to Florida's strict eligibility standards, 77% of these Medicaid recipients are children, seniors 65 and over, and people with disabilities.² Pregnant women, young adults 19-20, and parents with very low incomes also depend on Medicaid coverage to access preventive care, manage chronic conditions, and receive necessary medical treatments.

Medicaid Promotes Economic Security and Stability

When Floridians have access to healthcare through Medicaid, they are better able to maintain employment, care for their families, and contribute to their communities. Medicaid helps prevent financial catastrophe –including medical debt collections, bankruptcy, and foreclosure³– for working families, seniors, and disabled individuals while reducing uncompensated care costs for healthcare providers. Medicaid beneficiaries often have fluctuating income and unstable employment arrangements that make it impossible to take time off for illness or hospitalization without putting their jobs at risk. Without Medicaid, these inequities can create a snowball effect, increasing the cycle of economic hardship and declining health.⁴

Medicaid is Necessary for Children's Health and Development

Children from low-income families depend on Medicaid for their healthcare needs. In Florida, Medicaid covers approximately 2.1 million children, over 50% of the Medicaid population.⁵ The

¹ "Number of Medicaid Eligibles by Age by Assistance Category," *Agency for Healthcare Administration*, December 2024, <https://ahca.myflorida.com/content/download/25675/file/Age%20by%20Assistance%2012.24.pdf>

² *Id.* (calculating disabled adults 19-24 by assistance categories - Hospice, Institutional, Aged & Disabled, SSI, Protected Medicaid for Disabled Adults, QMB, QI, SLMB, and HCBS Waiver).

³ "How Medicaid Protects Beneficiaries from Financial Stress — and How It Could Do More", *The Commonwealth Fund*, February 21, 2024,

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2024/how-medicaid-protects-beneficiaries-financial-stress-and-how-it-could-do-more#:~:text=Findings%20from%20the%20Commonwealth%20Fund,are%20paying%20off%20over%20time>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ AHCA Medicaid Eligibles Report, *supra* Note 1.

program ensures children receive vital preventive services, vaccinations, developmental screenings, and treatment for acute and chronic conditions - investments that pay dividends throughout their lives. With Medicaid cuts, federal oversight of the Medicaid programs would be dramatically reduced, threatening guaranteed coverage and services, including these special protections for children.⁶ Loss of these protections would likely mean that more children's developmental delays or disabilities could go unidentified and unaddressed in early childhood, which in turn could lead to adverse outcomes and the need for more intensive special education or therapeutic services later in life.⁷ Medicaid cuts could be particularly devastating to working parents of special needs children who typically work fewer hours and earn less income in order to take the time to care for their children.⁸

Rural Communities Rely Heavily on Medicaid

Florida's rural hospitals and healthcare facilities rely heavily on Medicaid funding to remain operational. Cuts to Medicaid would disproportionately impact rural communities, potentially forcing facility closures and creating healthcare deserts in areas that already face significant challenges accessing medical care. Currently, 23% of Florida's rural hospitals are at risk of closure,⁹ and Medicaid serves as a crucial source of revenue.¹⁰ Rural families, in particular, are dependent on Medicaid in Florida as roughly 52% of children in rural areas and small towns receive coverage through Medicaid/CHIP compared to 40.3% in urban areas.¹¹ Florida is one of six states in which more than half of children in rural areas are enrolled in Medicaid.¹²

Medicaid is Crucial for Florida's Senior Population

Medicaid is crucial to over 700,000 of Florida's seniors,¹³ covering long-term care services that are not covered by Medicare. Medicaid helps seniors access nursing home care and home-based services that allow them to age with dignity. Notably, 62% of nursing home days in Florida are

⁶ Wayne Turner and Emma Parker-Newton, "Protect Medicaid Funding Issue #5: Children's Health", *National Health Law Program*, August 27, 2024, [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://healthlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/05-PMF-ChildrensHealth-FINAL-08.27.2024.pdf](https://healthlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/05-PMF-ChildrensHealth-FINAL-08.27.2024.pdf); see also "Medicaid Matters: To People, Our Economy and the Health Care System", *Families USA*, January 2025,

<https://familiesusa.org/resources/medicaid-matters-to-people-our-economy-and-the-health-care-system/>
⁷ Rebecca Ullrich, "Cuts to Medicaid Would Harm Young Children with Disabilities", *The Center for American Progress*, May 3, 2017, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/cuts-medicoid-harm-young-children-disabilities/#:~:text=Finally%2C%20per%20capita%20caps%20may.therapeutic%20services%20in%20the%20future>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ "Rural Hospitals at Risk of Closing," *Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform*, December 2024/2023, https://chqpr.org/downloads/Rural_Hospitals_at_Risk_of_Closing.pdf

¹⁰ Joan Alker, Aubrianna Osorio, Edwin Park, "Medicaid's Role in Small Towns and Rural Areas," *Georgetown Center for Children and Families*, January 15, 2025 <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2025/01/15/medicaids-role-in-small-towns-and-rural-areas/>

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

covered by Medicaid.¹⁴ Home and Community Based Services that support older adults with their activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, and toileting, account for a large share of Medicaid spending and would likely be among the first services cut under tightened budgets.¹⁵ Medicaid also helps older Floridians with Medicare premiums and cost-sharing, as well as additional benefits not covered by Medicare, including dental, vision, hearing, and non-emergency medical transportation.¹⁶

Medicaid Provides Independence and Dignity for Disabled Adults

Nearly 400,000 adults under age 65 in Florida living with disabilities depend on Medicaid for essential services that enable independent living and full participation in society.⁵ Many receive critical supports such as personal care assistance, specialized medical equipment, and rehabilitation services.¹⁷ These services not only improve quality of life but also make it possible for many disabled residents to work, engage in their communities, and avoid institutionalization.

Medicaid is Vital for Public Health Preparedness

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the critical importance of having a robust healthcare safety net. Medicaid serves as a crucial resource during public health emergencies and natural disasters, ensuring that vulnerable populations can access necessary care without delay. During the pandemic, Medicaid enrollment increased as so many hardworking Floridians suddenly found themselves without jobs and looked to Medicaid for health coverage. Medicaid enrollment in Florida rose 36% from February 2020 to December 2022.¹⁸ Yet, state Medicaid costs remained comparable to pre-pandemic levels.¹⁹ Had federal Medicaid funding been cut, the state would have had to bear the quickly rising costs from the crisis without federal assistance. Should the state be subject to a similar unexpected crisis, without the current level of federal support of

¹⁴ "Florida Medicaid's Comprehensive Health Care Coverage for Pregnant Women and Infants," *AHCA Senate Health Policy Committee*, January 14, 2025, <https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/Show/HP/MeetingPacket/6238>

¹⁵ Natalie Kean and Gelila Selassie, "Cutting Medicaid Harms Older Adults No Matter How It's Sliced", *Justice in Aging*, December 18, 2024, <https://justiceinaging.org/cutting-medicaid-harms-older-adults/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=3b3c5e5e-858c-47e8-8224-c045eb98e59d>

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ See, e.g., "Developmental Disabilities Individual Budgeting (iBudget) Waiver," *Agency for Healthcare Administration*, <https://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/home-and-community-based-settings-rule/developmental-disabilities-individual-budgeting-ibudget-waiver>

¹⁸ Bradley Corallo and Sophia Moreno, "Analysis of National Trends in Medicaid and CHIP Enrollment During the COVID-19 Pandemic", *KFF*, April 4, 2023, <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/analysis-of-recent-national-trends-in-medicaid-and-chip-enrollment/>

¹⁹ Elizabeth Williams, Elizabeth Hinton, Robin Rudowitz, and Anna Mudumala, "Medicaid Enrollment and Spending Growth Amid the Unwinding of the Continuous Enrollment Provision: FY 2023 & 2024", *KFF*, <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/medicaid-enrollment-and-spending-growth-amid-the-unwinding-of-the-continuous-enrollment-provision-fy-2023-2024/>

the Medicaid program, the state could be expected to cover increased Medicaid costs by significantly cutting program eligibility and benefits.²⁰

Medicaid Provides Economic Benefits to Florida

Federal Medicaid funding brings billions of dollars into Florida's economy, supporting healthcare jobs and generating economic activity throughout the state. Medicaid dollars account for the state's largest source of federal funding.²¹ Cuts to Medicaid would have ripple effects across our entire economy. As the demand on the state Medicaid budget grows, the state would have to choose between cuts to Medicaid services, or cuts to other budget areas, including education, recreational areas, and public safety.²² Provider payment rates are also likely to be cut, reducing provider networks and leading to workforce shortages for direct care workers.²³ Additionally, the loss of Medicaid funding would likely increase the burden on emergency rooms and public health systems, further inflating healthcare costs, and putting further strain on these resources.

Florida Medicaid Must Be Protected:

Medicaid is vital to Florida's residents, healthcare system and economy. The proposed Medicaid cuts aim to fund tax breaks for wealthy individuals and corporations at the expense of Florida's most vulnerable residents - children, seniors, and disabled adults.²⁴ Cuts would not only harm individuals, but also weaken the state economy and leave residents vulnerable to future health crises or natural disasters. Therefore, we call upon our elected officials to adopt the following principles when evaluating proposed legislation:

- Reject any proposals that would cut federal Medicaid funding or fundamentally alter the program's structure
- Protect and strengthen Medicaid's role as a vital safety net for vulnerable Floridians
- Work to improve access to healthcare services for all Florida residents
- Recognize that investments in Medicaid are investments in Florida's future

²⁰ Edwin Park, "Latest House Republican Study Committee Budget Plan Again Includes Draconian Medicaid Cuts", *Georgetown Center for Children and Families*, March 21, 2024, <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2024/03/21/latest-house-republican-study-committee-budget-plan-again-includes-draconian-medicaid-cuts/>

²¹ Esteban Leonardo Santis, "Florida FY 2024-25 Budget Summary: Introduction and Revenue Overview", *Florida Policy Institute*, August 9, 2024, <https://www.floridapolicy.org/posts/florida-fy-2024-25-budget-introduction-and-revenue-overview>; see also "Medicaid Matters," *supra* Note 6.

²² Edwin Park, "Illustrating the Harmful Impact of Medicaid Block Grants and Per Capita Caps on State Funding of K-12 Education", *Georgetown Center for Children and Families*, July 2020, https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Medicaid-Block-Grants-and-Caps_July.pdf

²³ Cutting Medicaid Harms Older Adults, *supra* Note 14.

²⁴ *Id.*

These principles reflect our commitment to maintaining a strong and effective Medicaid program that serves the needs of all Floridians. We believe healthcare is a fundamental right, and Medicaid is essential to ensuring that right is protected for our most vulnerable residents.

Signatories:

Florida Health Justice Project
Florida Policy Institute
Florida Voices For Health
AFINS - Advancing Families & Individual Needing Services
Allegany Franciscan Ministries
American Children's Campaign
Americans for Immigrant Justice
Audubon Park Church Orlando
Black Health Commission
Branches United Methodist Church
Brevard County Legal Aid, Inc.
Catalyst Miami
Center for Children's Rights, Inc
Central Florida Jobs with Justice
Circles USA
Collectively
Community Health Centers of Pinellas dba Evara Health
Democratic Disability Caucus of Florida
Disability Rights Florida
End Childhood Hunger
Extended Hands Community Outreach, Inc.
Families for Strong Public Schools
Farmworker Association of Florida
FL National Organization for Women
FLARA: Florida Alliance For Retired Americans
Florida Center for Fiscal and Economic Policy
Florida Justice Institute
Florida People's Advocacy Center
FoodRecovery.org
Green Clean of Avalon
Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc.
Gulfcoast Legal Services
Health Foundation of South Florida

Jacksonville Area Legal Aid
Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc.
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Makia's Holistic Healings
Mammha
Miami Workers Center
MomsRising | MamásConPoder
NAACP Florida State Conference
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
Oceanus Pools
One Voice Coalition Florida
People Power United
RESULT North Florida Chapter
Seamless behavior group
SEIU Florida
SEIU/Florida Public Services Union
South Florida Hunger Coalition, Inc.
Sprout Up, Inc.
The AIDS Institute
The Mental Health Association of Central Florida
UnidosUS
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