Medicaid and CHIP

Our Position

We believe that every child in America deserves a healthy first 1,000 days. Because Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are a critical source of health insurance for millions of children and families in the U.S., 1,000 Days supports full federal funding for these programs and a robust benefit package that ensures women and children get the care they need to be healthy. To safeguard healthcare access and affordability, we oppose any changes to Medicaid and CHIP—such as caps, block grants, eligibility restrictions, or other cuts—that limit coverage and access to critical health services.

What’s At Stake

Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are two of the most vital sources of health insurance for families of young children for whom employer-sponsored or individual coverage may not be offered or may be prohibitively expensive. Together, these two programs provide coverage for most young children (from birth through the age of 5) with family incomes near the federal poverty level. More than 45 million children get their health coverage through Medicaid and CHIP, which covers 45% of all children under the age of six and 79% of children living in poverty. Fifty one percent of all Medicaid and CHIP enrollees are children and Medicaid covers nearly half of all births in the US—or almost 2 million births each year.

Medicaid’s benefit package is specifically designed to ensure that mothers receive a comprehensive set of critical services during pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and beyond. Children on Medicaid receive a special benefit package called the Early, Periodic Screening, Treatment and Diagnosis (EPSDT) that guarantees all children get all necessary screenings, services and treatments they need—including developmental, vision and hearing screenings—so that health problems can be identified and diagnosed early, treated or prevented altogether.

There are long-term economic and societal benefits to ensuring young children and their families have access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare. Studies show that children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP are less likely to miss school due to illness or injury, perform better in school, are more likely to graduate high school, earn higher wages and grow to be healthier adults.

Yet Medicaid and CHIP are currently at risk. Efforts to cut and weaken Medicaid will effectively eliminate health insurance for millions of low-income children and families who need it.
Proposals to strip Medicaid of its entitlement status and turn it into a capped federal financing stream—like a block grant or a per capita cap—will eliminate the robust guarantee of benefits for adults and the EPSDT for children, and will force states to ration access to care.

Reducing eligibility in Medicaid or reducing federal funding for Medicaid or CHIP will have detrimental, long-lasting impacts on the health and well-being of young children and their families throughout the U.S.—a burden that will disproportionately impact low-income families and communities of color, particularly in the 19 states that did not adopt Medicaid expansion. Such efforts will likely result in skyrocketing rates of uninsured women, putting the lives of many of America’s mothers and babies at risk, and mean higher health care costs and weaker benefit packages for all Americans.

**Solutions We Support**

**Coverage for All**
Health insurance must be available and affordable to everyone regardless of their employment or income. For low-income communities, this can best be accomplished through strengthening Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

**Maintain and Expand Coverage**
Today, 32 states have expanded their Medicaid programs to cover everyone at or below 138% of the federal poverty line, providing health insurance to parents and other adults. CHIP stands on the shoulders of Medicaid, providing coverage to children in working families who might otherwise not be eligible for Medicaid. This coverage must be maintained and no one should lose access to benefits to which they are entitled today.

**Full Federal Commitment**
Federal policy makers must maintain the entitlement nature of Medicaid, and provide full federal financing for a comprehensive benefit package for all eligible people in the state. CHIP must be reauthorized and fully funded.

**Comprehensive Benefits and Access to Services**
Medicaid must continue to provide comprehensive care including the following essential benefits:

- EPSDT for all Medicaid-enrolled children to prevent, treat or help manage any diagnosis, medical or behavioral health condition;
- Comprehensive maternity benefit (i.e. prenatal care and childbirth services) as well as preconception care;
- Comprehensive pediatric benefit and well-child care;
- Breastfeeding services such as counseling and lactation management and supplies and equipment such as breast pumps;
- Nutrition counseling, folic acid supplements and weight management during pregnancy;
- Well-woman visits and health screenings for conditions such as anemia, gestational diabetes, and post-partum depression—all of which have detrimental effects on the health of mom and baby.

All plans must include meaningful access to in-network providers to support the delivery of all the services needed in the first 1,000 days and beyond. A range of provider types must be covered, including lactation specialists, community-based providers and home visitors. Health providers should be trained to understand the unique needs of families during the first 1,000 days.
Call To Action

We call on Congress and the Administration to protect, strengthen and fully fund Medicaid and CHIP to ensure all mothers, babies and toddlers in America have the care they need to be healthy and thrive.