



701 S. Main Street
Akron, OH 44311
(p) 330.940.1441
(e) info@autismakron.org
(w) AutismAkron.org

Autism Society Greater Akron Stands With Autism Society of America to Oppose Proposed Medicaid Cuts

For Immediate Release
Contact: Laurie Cramer
Executive Director, Autism Society Greater Akron
(330) 940-1441 x3
Scott Badesch
Chairman and CEO, Autism Society of America
(301) 657.0881

(Akron, Mar 15, 2017)...The Autism Society of Greater Akron stands with the Autism Society of America (full statement [HERE](#)) asking our federal legislators to slow down on proposed Medicaid changes that could hurt our state's most vulnerable populations, in particular individuals with autism and other intellectual disabilities.

Laurie Cramer, Executive Director of the Autism Society of Greater Akron, said, "People with disabilities rely on Medicaid for everything from respite care, to job coaching, to medical services. Although Medicaid was not created with people with disabilities in mind, it has become one of the only financial supports available. We are asking that Congress consider the intellectually disabled, slow down, and think through the impact on this vulnerable population; we truly are afraid the proposed changes will be a huge set back in the progress the disability community has made.

"The House of Representatives proposal to replace the Affordable Care Act," Cramer continued, "is actually more of a Medicaid overhaul. It would transition federal Medicaid funding to a per-capital cap basis by 2020, transforming the fundamentals of how Medicaid is administered. Essentially, per-capital caps do not grow with changing health care needs, leaving the State's to make up those costs. Gov. Kasich has stated quite clearly that Ohio will not be able to meet the demands of those who will be hurt under these changes. For people with disabilities, our fear is longer wait lists for services, underfunded programs, and reduced quality in care."

Cramer concluded, "People with disabilities and those who love them do not deserve to be thrown back after all the hard fought gains they have made. We urge Congress to take another direction with Medicaid and to first, "Do no harm."

*The **Autism Society of Greater Akron (ASGA)** is part of a nationwide network of affiliates that are part of the Autism Society of America, the nation's largest and oldest grassroots autism organization. ASGA serves Summit, Stark, Wayne, Portage and Medina counties (OH) and works locally to achieve its mission --to improve the lives of all affected by autism. We do this by increasing **public awareness** about the day-to-day issues faced by people on the autism spectrum, **advocating** for appropriate services for individuals across the*

*lifespan, and, providing **educational opportunities** and **support** for families, providers, doctors, educators and others on how best to support someone with autism.*

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The Autism Society of America's full statement follows:

The Autism Society of America, representing more than 3 million people on the autism spectrum and nearly 12 million family members, strongly opposes proposed changes to Medicaid in the American Health Care Act. These changes would jeopardize services for the nation's most vulnerable people, particularly those with disabilities. We are urging the House and Senate to preserve the federal-state partnership that has made Medicaid a crucial safety net for them.

We are particularly opposed to curtailing the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act, which serves as a lifeline for millions of people with disabilities and many of their caregivers. We also oppose the creation of a per capita cap and the elimination of the essential health benefits requirement, both set to take effect in 2020. Tight state budgets will not be able to make up for these changes, leading to a decline in services and supports for people with disabilities.

Slashing federal support for Medicaid by an estimated \$880 billion, according to the Congressional Budget Office, over 10 years would force states to reduce eligibility and services, placing the health and well-being of people with disabilities at risk. Our grassroots network of nearly 100 affiliates will not stand by and allow these cuts to happen. They could lead to unintended consequences affecting millions of people with disabilities who seek to live as independently as possible in their communities.

The complex and far-reaching changes to Medicaid alone warrant increased transparency and additional legislative hearings, with greater public input. We urge both the House and Senate to slow down and take into consideration the views of those who would be directly affected by these reductions.

As the nation's largest organization serving individuals with autism and their families and caregivers, we will continue to monitor your actions in the coming weeks and months. We will send our affiliates and members a scorecard informing them how their senators and representatives vote on this or any measure affecting Medicaid eligibility and benefits. We hope Congress makes the necessary changes to this legislation – or votes against it.