



4101 South Bannock Street
Englewood, Colorado 80110-4605
303.762.8762 | case@co-case.org
www.co-case.org



Advocacy



Learning



Networking

Empowering Colorado education leaders through advocacy, professional learning and networking to deliver on the promise of public education.

June 14, 2017

Dear Senator Bennet,

I am writing on behalf the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) to express serious concerns that the American Health Care Act (AHCA) will jeopardize healthcare for the nation's most vulnerable children in school: students with disabilities and students in poverty. CASE as an organization represents all school leaders across the state of Colorado.

Restructuring Medicaid to a per capita cap system will undermine Colorado's ability to provide America's neediest children access to vital healthcare necessary to ensure they are able to succeed in school and beyond. Currently, districts in our state receive a total of over \$65 million in Medicaid reimbursement each year. These school-based Medicaid programs serve as a lifeline to children who can't access critical healthcare and services outside of their school. Under the American Health Care Act, the bulk of the costs for health care coverage would be shifted to our state even though health needs and costs of care for children will remain the same or increase. States and local communities will have to compensate for this federal disinvestment in our children's healthcare. If we cannot adequately make up the difference in federal funding, providers will be forced to cut eligibility, services, and benefits for children.

A school's primary responsibility is to provide students with a high-quality education, but children cannot learn to their fullest potential with unmet health needs. As such, specialized instructional support personnel regularly provide critical health services to ensure all children are ready to learn and able to thrive alongside their peers. Schools deliver services effectively and efficiently since school is where children spend their days. Increasing access to healthcare services through Medicaid improves health care as well as educational outcomes for students. Providing health and wellness services for students in poverty and services that benefit students with disabilities ultimately enables more children to become employable and attend higher education.

Under the current proposal, Colorado would no longer have to consider schools as eligible Medicaid providers, leaving districts with the same obligation to provide services for students with disabilities under IDEA, but no Medicaid dollars to provide medically-necessary services. Basic medical screenings covered by Medicaid to identify vision, hearing, and mental health problems of students would no longer be possible, making these problems more difficult to address and more expensive to treat. Moving health screenings out of schools also reduces access to early identification and treatment, resulting in more costly treatment down the road. In addition, districts will have to lay off school personnel like nurses, counselors and therapists since they won't be able to supplement their salaries with Medicaid.

As the Senate begins to consider a bill to restructure Medicaid, I urge you to carefully consider the important benefits that Medicaid, as it is currently constructed, provides to our nation's most vulnerable children. Schools are often the hub of the community, and converting Medicaid to a per capita cap system threatens to significantly reduce access to comprehensive physical, mental and behavioral health care for children with disabilities and those living in poverty.

Sincerely,

Lisa A. Escárcega
CASE Executive Director

CAES

Colorado Association of
Educational Specialists

CAESP

Colorado Association
of Elementary
School Principals

CALET

Colorado Association of
Leaders in Educational
Technology

CASPA

Colorado Association
of School Personnel
Administrators

CASSA

Colorado Association
of Superintendents and
Senior Administrators

CASSP

Colorado Association
of Secondary
School Principals

DBO

Department of
Business Officials