

Better Care Better Jobs Act (S. 100/H.R. 547)

BACKGROUND

Home and Community-based Services (HCBS) have consistently proven to be a crucial benefit of the Medicaid program. The home has long been the most desired site of care for beneficiaries, resulting in high patient satisfaction scores. Care in the home is also the most cost-effective and fiscally responsible setting for care delivery. HCBS could include home health care, durable medical equipment, personal care services, and hospice care, as well as human services such as adult daycare, meal delivery, transportation, and home modifications. These services tend to be enjoyed by seniors and the disabled, enabling them to maintain their independence and stay active in their communities.

Data from 2018 demonstrates that a nearly five million Medicaid beneficiaries were enrolled for HCBS services between traditional state plans and waiver authorities. However, some states cap enrollment, leading to approximately 820,000 on waitlists for needed care.

ISSUE

While patient waitlists are an ongoing problem, Medicaid has long been an underfunded program. Many providers around the country elect not to participate in the Medicaid program due to its low reimbursement rates. In some cases, providers struggle to cover their own expenses, including workforce payroll, with what they receive in Medicaid payment rates. Naturally this creates challenges to access to care and limited options in providers available for beneficiaries to choose from, but it also limits what a home care company can provide as compensation to their workforce. This leaves home care companies at a distinct disadvantage in competing for skilled and experienced workers.

The average home care aide wage in 2019 was \$12.12 per hour. Recent reporting in the Washington Post reveals approximately 80 percent of employers are paying employees at least \$15 per hour. Home care work tends to be both physically and emotionally challenging for the caregivers, a combination not common in many other occupations. Caregivers frequently pursue different career options that provide greater compensation with fewer demands.

WHAT CONGRESS CAN DO

Approve the Better Care Better Jobs Act (S. 100/H.R. 547) as introduced by Senator Casey and Rep. Dingell. This legislation would make key improvements to the Medicaid program addressing both patient and caregiver challenges. Specifically, it would:

- Permanently increase the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) by 10% for HCBS.
- Expand HCBS to require personal care services, family caregiver supports, and respite care.
- Address and annually update HCBS payment rates with an opportunity for public input.
- Update and develop training opportunities for the workforce.
- Require a maintenance of effort mandating that new funds supplement and not supplant current outlays.
- Make permanent spousal impoverishment protections for recipients of HCBS.
- Make permanent the Medicaid Money Follows the Person program.



For more information
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