

New Horizons

Housing That Supports Independence



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Disability Advocates Protest Medicaid Cuts

by Michelle Diamant | June 6, 2017 DisabilityScoop



Police arrest demonstrators in wheelchairs protesting the Republican health care bill after they refused to leave the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in March. Disability advocates will stage rallies Tuesday on Capitol Hill and in seven states to denounce the bill's proposed cuts to Medicaid. (Jim Bourg/Reuters)

In what's being billed as a national day of action, dozens of advocacy groups are joining members of Congress to sound alarm bells about proposed cuts to Medicaid, which they say will have severe consequences for people with disabilities.

With rallies on Capitol Hill and across the nation on Tuesday, disability advocates plan to speak out against the American Health Care Act, a Republican health care reform bill that was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives in May.

The legislation would fundamentally alter Medicaid by shifting the program to a per capita cap system. Rather than operate as an entitlement program, the federal government would offer a fixed amount of money for each beneficiary.

If enacted, the plan is estimated to reduce Medicaid spending by \$834 billion over 10 years, according to an analysis from the Congressional Budget Office.

"These cuts and caps are absolutely unacceptable," said Alison Barkoff of the Center for Public Representation who is helping to plan the events organized by the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, a coalition of disability advocacy groups. "People with disabilities will be harmed and literally there are some people with disabilities who might not be able to survive these cuts."

Barkoff said that optional benefits like home and community-based services would likely be the first affected if cuts or caps are approved leading to longer waiting lists, service reductions and more stringent eligibility requirements.

U.S. Sens. Bob Casey, D-Pa., Ron Wyden, D-Ore., Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., and Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., are expected to appear at the event in Washington, D.C. midday Tuesday.

Meanwhile, additional rallies are planned in Texas, Illinois, Montana, Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona and Washington, many of which are scheduled to take place outside lawmakers' offices. And, disability advocates from across the country are being encouraged to call their senators.

The efforts come as a group of Republican senators work to develop their own version of the health care bill.

"There are thirteen senators hidden away in the capitol plotting to decimate Medicaid," Casey said. "They are going to hear from all of us."

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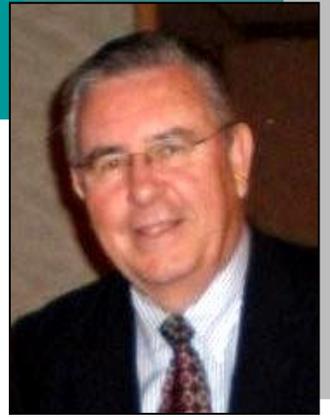
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“My Two Cents”

By *Tim Doherty, Executive Director*



We recently took a family vacation to Florida, which required that we travel on a plane. Anyone who is disabled, and who has had the experience of traveling on an airplane will fully understand what I am about to say. What a nightmare.

First of all, if you use a wheelchair you just can't get on the plane, like anyone else. The airline will have to use an isle chair to get you to your seat. Suffice it to say, you are loaded on this "chair", strapped in like a piece of luggage, and carted down that very narrow isle, until you arrive at your seat. Then if you need assistance to transfer, you will need your PCA or a family member to help get you into the seat. Of course, the seat is very narrow, so if you are like me, and have a little excess "baggage", it requires a little shimmy to get finally settled. Once settled in, you hope that they put your manual chair on the plane as well, otherwise you are stuck when you finally arrive at your destination.

And as if that is not humiliating enough, don't try to use the bathroom on the plane, because it isn't accessible—for anyone, let alone someone who uses a wheelchair. Now most able bodied people can get into the bathroom however it is just impossible for someone who uses a wheelchair to get in at all. So that begs the question, if you have to go, what do you do?

So my next question, is why with the ADA and all the laws on the books about equality and treating the disabled with the same rights as anyone else, how can the airlines get away with this? The answer is that the airlines are EXEMPT from certain portions of the ADA, and making airplanes accessible is one of them.

Under the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) single isle planes built prior to 1992 are not required to have an accessible bathroom. These are the planes most used on Domestic flights (airbus 300 series). Planes built after 1992, with twin isles, are required to have at least one accessible lavatory, complete with door lock, accessible call button, and grab bars. Planes that travel overseas, on longer flights are also required to have an accessible lavatory. However, even on those planes that do have an "accessible" lavatory, most disabled say that they still can't use that lavatory, because there are no specifications about height or placement of grab bars that are required to be used by the airplane manufacturers. As a result, the airlines can interpret these regulations to fit their own benefit. And we all know that creating bigger, accessible bathrooms on airplanes will take away precious seats, which means a loss of revenue. Something needs to be done about this condition. I plan to write to my congressman and will join with other advocacy groups to force the airlines to make changes so that anyone who uses a wheelchair, will also be able to use the bathroom on an airplane in flight.



From Norman's Desk



Our nation celebrates its Declaration of Independence from Great Britain on July 4th. We celebrate the idea that this nation wanted to be free from rules, regulations, and laws created without input from the Colonies.

We also celebrate the concept that each person has equality in the eyes of the law. Although many have tramped upon this basic concept throughout our history, its promise has survived thanks to the sacrifice, blood, sweat, and tears of many.

As we celebrate Independence Day, we need to remember what we are celebrating and why. We need to remember the sacrifices of those who have died for the concepts of independence, liberty, and freedom. We must also remember that the fight is not over for people with disabilities, and, indeed, remember that the fight is only beginning for many of us.

The promise has been slow in coming for people with disabilities, and for many of us, equality is still not here, is still a concept enjoyed by others, and is a promise that still needs to be kept.

The promise is a lofty one, yet for some people with disabilities the promise translates into more practical considerations: the freedom to make choices in their daily lives, to be responsible for their lives, and to be a contributing part of their community.

Freedom and independence are grand sounding words, but for some they mean the right to do simple tasks. Freedom and independence are empty and hollow words when a debate about the worthiness of the lives of people with disabilities is encouraged by silence in one of our nation's oldest institutions of higher learning.

Expecting the promise of freedom to be kept without struggle and sacrifice is foolhardy. Again, our history teaches that participatory governance over oneself or one's country means stepping up to participate and sacrifice. Individuals must take up the cause of freedom, work together, and battle for the promise to be kept. This is true now for people with disabilities. The pictures below show the most recent participation through peaceful disobedience at our Nation's Capitol.

So, while we celebrate what happened 241 years ago, let us remember for many of us with disabilities the struggle for freedom continues!

Norman A. Smith, Associate Executive Director - ProjectFreedom1@aol.com



Betty Maxwell Retires After 40 Years With Project Freedom

On June 9th, management, employees, tenants and Betty's family showered her with love at a retirement party celebrated at Project Freedom Robbinsville. Betty began her relationship with the Nottingham Recreation Center for the Physically Limited as a volunteer. This organization grew into the Project Freedom we know today. While Betty's husband drove the bus, her children grew up alongside her helping tenants during the formative years of the organization and beyond. Below are some photos taken at her party.





Hamilton Happenings

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
5-Jul	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
13-Jul	Thu	Hamilton Salads & Shakes	Prog. Time 5:00 -7:30 PM
27-Jul	Thu	Hamilton Wellness	Prog. Time 5:00 -8:30 PM



A BIG thank you to Bristol-Myers Squibb volunteers who came to the Lawrence location Monday (6/12/17). Approximately 30 volunteers came and worked vigorously through the 100 degree weather doing multiple activities including: mulching, planting flowers, trimming trees and bushes, power washing, filling in black top cracks, spreading decorative rocks and spraying for insects. BMS's helping hands volunteer initiative has been a support to us for years and continues to do so. I am told they will be going to Robbinsville in the near future to continue helping.

Lawrence Goings On

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
5-Jul	Wed	Hamilton/Lawrence Shopping	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
12-Jul	Wed	Lawrence Games / DP	Prog. Time 3:00 -5:00 PM
26-Jul	Wed	Lawrence Games / DP	Prog. Time 3:00 -5:00 PM



Lawrence recently addressed a very serious problem... violence against women with developmental disabilities. A representative from the Division of Disabilities Services came to Lawrence to speak about specific issues against women with disabilities. The program was presented under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). For more information, copy this link to watch a video on the subject

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhLsATw00o4>



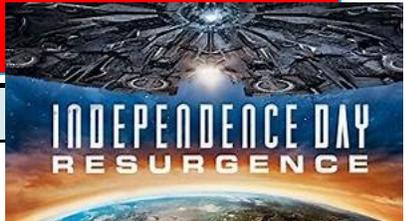
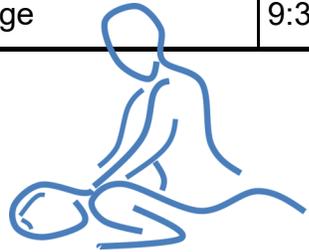
Robbinsville Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
5-Jul	Wed	Robbinsville PCIL Cooking Class 	Prog. Time 6:00 -7:00 PM
6-Jul	Thu	Robbinsville Gardening & Salads	Prog. Time 5:30 to Dusk
10-Jul	Mon	Robbinsville Wellness	Prog. Time 6:30 - 8:00 PM
11-Jul	Tue	Robbinsville Gardening & Concert	Prog. Time 6:30 til Dusk
12-Jul	Wed	Robbinsville PCIL Cooking Class	Prog. Time 6:00 -7:00 PM
18-Jul	Tue	Robbinsville Chair Yoga	Prog. Time 6:00 -7:00 PM
20-Jul	Thu	Robbinsville Meditation Class 	Prog. Time 6:00 -7:00 PM
25-Jul	Tue	Robbinsville Gardening & Concert	Prog. Time 6:30 til Dusk



Matt, Bob & John relaxing by the beautiful lake at Robbinsville

Hopewell Events

DATE	DAY	PROGRAM (in Community Room)	TIME
7/3/17	Mon	Tenant Afternoon Holiday Movie 'Independence Day' 	1:30 PM
7/7/17	Fri	Mercer Home Health Hosting Pokeno	3:00 PM to 4:00 PM
7/11/17	Tues	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage	1:15 PM to 3:15 PM
7/18/17	Thur	Medicare Fraud Prevention Presentation	2:00 PM
7/26/17	Wed	Heart to Hearts Chair Massage 	9:30 AM to 11:30 AM

Severe Shortage Of Direct Care Workers Triggering Crisis *Reprinted from Kaiser Health News | May 9, 2017 by Judith Graham*

Acute shortages of home health aides and nursing assistants are cropping up across the country, threatening care for people with serious disabilities and vulnerable older adults.



In Minnesota and Wisconsin, nursing homes have denied admission to thousands of patients over the past year because they lack essential staff, according to local long-term care associations. In New York, patients living in rural areas have been injured, soiled themselves and gone without meals because paid caregivers aren't available, according to testimony provided to the state Assembly's health committee in February. In Illinois, the independence of people with severe developmental disabilities is being compromised, as agencies experience staff shortages of up to 30 percent, according to a court monitor overseeing a federal consent decree.

The emerging crisis is driven by low wages — around \$10 an hour, mostly funded by state Medicaid programs — and a shrinking pool of workers willing to perform this physically and emotionally demanding work: helping people get in

and out of bed, go to the bathroom, shower, eat, participate in activities, and often dealing with challenging behaviors.

It portends even worse difficulties to come, as America's senior citizen population swells to 88 million people in 2050, up from 48 million currently, and requires more assistance with chronic health conditions and disabilities, experts warn.

Rising Demand, Stagnant Wages

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates an additional 1.1 million workers of this kind will be needed by 2024 — a 26 percent increase over 2014. Yet, the population of potential workers who tend to fill these jobs, overwhelmingly women ages 25 to 64, will increase at a much slower rate.

After the recession of 2008-09, positions in Medicaid-funded home health agencies, nursing homes and community service agencies were relatively easy to fill for several years. But the improving economy has led workers to pursue other higher-paying alternatives, in retail services for example, and turnover rates have soared.

At the same time, wages for nursing assistants, home health aides and personal care aides have stagnated, making recruitment difficult. The average hourly rate nationally is \$10.11 — a few cents lower than a decade ago, according to PHI, an organization that studies the direct-care workforce. There is a push on now in a handful of states to raise the minimum to \$15 an hour.

Even for-profit franchises that offer services such as light housekeeping and companionship to seniors who pay out-of-pocket are having problems with staffing. "All the experienced workers are already placed with families. They're off the market," said Carrie Bianco, owner of Always Best Care Senior Services, which is based in Torrance, Calif., with franchises in 30 states.

Finding new employees was so difficult that Bianco started her own 14-week training program for caregivers nine months ago. To attract recruits, she ran ads targeting women who had left the workforce or been close to their grandparents. In exchange for free tuition, graduates must agree to start working for her agency.

"There's much more competition now — a lot of franchises have opened and people will approach our workers outside our building or in the lobby and ask if they want to come work for them," said Karen Kulp, president of Home Care Associates of Philadelphia.

Hardest to cover in Kulp's area are people with disabilities or older adults who live at some distance from the city center and need only one to two hours of help a day. Workers prefer longer shifts and less time traveling between clients, so they gravitate to other opportunities and "these people are not necessarily getting service," she said. It isn't possible to document exactly how common these problems are nationally. Neither states nor the federal government routinely collect information about staff vacancy rates in home care agencies or nursing homes, turnover rates or people going without services.

Hard Times In Wisconsin

Some of the best data available come from Wisconsin, where long-term care facilities and agencies serving seniors and people with disabilities have surveyed their members over the past year. The findings are startling. One of seven caregiving positions in Wisconsin nursing homes and group homes remained unfilled, one survey discovered; 70 percent of administrators reported a lack of qualified job applicants. As a result, 18 percent of long-term facilities in Wisconsin have had to limit resident admissions, declining care for more than 5,300 vulnerable residents.

"The words 'unprecedented' and 'desperate' come to mind," said John Sauer, president and chief executive of LeadingAge Wisconsin, which represents not-for-profit long-term care institutions. Sauer and others blame inadequate payments from Medicaid — which funds about two-thirds of nursing homes' business — for the bind. In rural areas, especially, operators are at the breaking point.

"We are very seriously considering closing our nursing facility so it doesn't drive the whole corporation out of business," said Greg Loeser, chief executive of Lola Living Assistance, which offers skilled nursing, assisted living and independent living services in a rural area about 70 miles west of Green Bay. Like other short-staffed operators, he's had to ask employees to work overtime and use agency staff, increasing labor costs substantially. A nearby state veterans home, the largest in Wisconsin, pays higher wages, making it hard for him to find employees. Last year, Lola's losses on Medicaid-funded residents skyrocketed to \$631,000 — an "unsustainable amount," Loeser said. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker has proposed a 2 percent Medicaid increase for long-term care facilities and personal care agencies for each of the next two years, but that won't be enough to make a substantial difference, Loeser and other experts say.

The situation is equally grim for Wisconsin agencies that send personal care workers into people's homes. According to a separate survey in 2016, 85 percent of agencies said they didn't have enough staff to cover all shifts, and 43 percent reported not filling shifts at least seven times a month.

Barbara Vedder, 67, of Madison, paralyzed from her chest down since a spinal cord injury in 1981, has witnessed the impact firsthand. Currently, she qualifies for 8.75 hours of help a day, while her husband tends to her in the evening. "It's getting much, much, much more difficult to find willing, capable people to help me," she said. "It's a revolving door: People come for a couple of months, maybe, then they find a better job or they get pregnant or they move out of state. It's an endless state of not knowing what's going to happen next — will somebody be around to help me tomorrow? Next month?"

When caregivers don't show up or shifts are cut back or canceled, "I don't get proper cleaning around my catheter or in my groin area," Vedder continued. "I'll skip a meal or wait later several hours to take a pill. I won't get my range-of-motion exercises, or my wheelchair cushion might slip out of place and I'll start getting sore. Basically, I start losing my health."

Debra Ramacher and her husband have been unable to find paid caregivers since June 2015 for daughter Maya, 20, and son Michael, 19, both of whom have cerebral palsy, epilepsy and other significant disabilities. The family lives in New Richmond in western Wisconsin, about 45 minutes from the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. "At least three agencies told me they've stopped trying to hire personal care aides. They can't find anybody and it costs them money to advertise," said Ramacher, executive director of Wisconsin Family Ties, an organization for families with children with emotional, behavioral and mental disorders. "It's incredibly stressful on all of us, living with this kind of uncertainty," she said. Every few months, Ramacher tries to find caregivers on her own by putting ads up on Craigslist, in local newspapers and on job boards. "We get a few bites," she said. "Most recently, two people came and interviewed. One never got back to us; the other got a better job that paid more." In the meantime, she and her husband are being paid by Medicaid to look after Maya and Michael. "We don't want to be the caregivers; we want to have our own life," Ramacher said. "But we don't have any option."

Special Olympics of N.J. opens annual Summer Games

The Special Olympics of New Jersey kicked off their annual Summer Games Friday evening June 9, 2017 at The College of New Jersey. The arrival of the Law Enforcement Torch Run started the opening ceremonies.

Reprinted (Kevin Shea | NJ Advance Media)



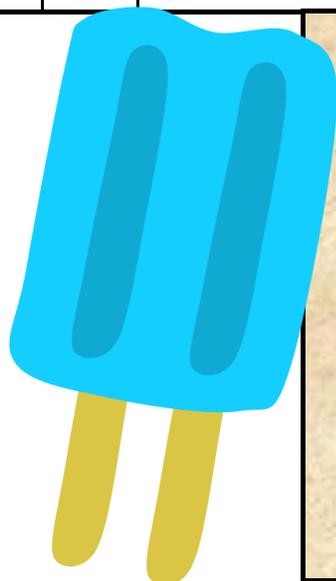
Congratulations!

Ray Truitt, a tenant at PF Lawrence, won gold and silver in tennis

July General Recreation

Club Freedom Events Highlighted

1-Jul	Sat	Aquatics Hamilton YMCA	Bus Leaves PFR 11:30 AM
3-Jul	Mon	Offices Closed for Holiday	
4-Jul	Tue	Independence Day PF Offices CLOSED	
5-Jul	Wed	Walmart Shuttle	Bus leaves PFR 9:30 AM
6-Jul	Thu	Shore Trip - Seaside 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
8-Jul	Sat	Trenton Thunder Baseball Game	Bus Leaves PFR 5:00 PM
10-Jul	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
11-Jul	Tue	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
13-Jul	Thu	Mall Trip Moorestown 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
15-Jul	Sat	Aquatics Hamilton YMCA	Bus Leaves PFR 11:30 AM
17-Jul	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
19-Jul	Wed	Shore Trip - Pt. Pleasant 5 People Needed	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
20-Jul	Thu	Columbus Farmers & Flea Market	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
22-Jul	Sat	Trenton Thunder Baseball Game	Bus Leaves PFR 5:00 PM
24-Jul	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM
26-Jul	Wed	Grocery Shopping - Shop Rite	Bus Leaves PFR 9:30 AM
26-Jul	Wed	27th Anniversary of the A.D.A. being signed	
31-Jul	Mon	Day Program	Prog. Time 10 AM-3 PM



Happy Birthday

July 4
Janis Parker

July 8
Susan Mushak

July 10
Pete McKelvey

July 11
Frieda Applegate

July 15
The Americans with Disabilities Act 27 Years Old
and Still Kicking (and Being Kicked!)

Happy Anniversary

July 2
Joe & Daneen Morelli



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GAMES



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