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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# More must be done to protect Medicaid

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Congress is rushing the passage of a massive budget reconciliation package that will shift billions of dollars in Medicaid costs to states and local governments. Any way you slice it, the fiscal hit will be enormous and painful.

Medicaid is health insurance coverage for approximately seven million New Yorkers. It fuels the health care delivery system, ensuring hospitals, health centers, mental health services, maternity care, and rehab centers can keep the lights on and that doctors, nurses, and therapists are there when we need them.

The proposed changes will require a total revamping of the way New York funds health care. Access to medical care in the hardest-to-reach areas will be hurt the most.

The congressional plan relies on people losing coverage through paperwork barriers and red tape. People will become uninsured, not because they earn too much, but because they didn't fill out the right form. This is true whether the cuts amount to \$13.5 billion, the state Department of Health's figure, or \$7 billion, the Empire Center for Public Policy's figure.

Medicaid is a safety net for people in the Capital Region and across the state, filling in when insurance isn't available through an employer, during a health crisis, and when faced with the challenges of aging.

This summer, we mark Medicaid's 60th anniversary. Let's hope we're celebrating the preservation of health coverage for all who need it, not mourning lost coverage for millions of New Yorkers.

The writer is the Coalition Coordinator for Medicaid Matters New York.

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