



Medicaid Is About Belonging to God's Beloved Community

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Katie Beckett was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and at the age of five months old, she contracted a brain inflection and went into a coma. Most of the first three years of her life was spent in the hospital on a ventilator. Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) are waivers that help people with disabilities and older adults get care at home or in their community instead of institutions. The first HCBS was in 1982 and was, inspired by the story of Katie. This led to the first Medicaid waiver to allow families to access care at home instead of institutions. Hearing stories like Katie's reminds us that loving our neighbors is a call to action.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan heard about Katie's situation and changed the rule so she could leave the hospital and go home. One reason the Reagan administration supported the creation of HCBS program is because it cost significantly less — about one-sixth as much — for someone like Katie [to receive the care at home, instead of in a hospital.](#)

Money might be the political motivator for doing the right thing. But what motivates us in the church? We may want to consider our highest motivation is found in the invitation to follow the way of Jesus by loving our neighbors and creating beloved communities where all belong in the Body of Christ. Medicaid is about money. But it's about more than money for us as Christians. It's about belonging. People belong in their communities, not in institutions. Medicaid is essential to ensuring the civil rights of people with disabilities because it supports individuals living in the community rather than in nursing homes or other institutions. Medicaid is about belonging.

My friend Erin Raffety is the author of [*From Inclusion to Justice: Disability, Ministry, and Congregational Leadership*](#) and is a mom of a disabled child with complex medical needs

and shares her families' story on social media as a way to shine a light on the current challenges families face every day in this political climate to support in-home care for their children. Erin is advocating by putting a name and a face on this real issue impacting millions of Americans. The life-saving HCBS program Katie's life inspired is currently being threatened by Medicaid cuts.

Republicans in both the Senate and House are trying to cut Medicaid and take it away from millions of people and even make it harder for people to get health insurance in other ways. They want to spend less money on Medicaid so that the government can spend more money on immigration police and helping some rich people spend less on their taxes. Cutting medical care for disabled people is immoral and unjust. Because many people with disabilities, older adults, and advocates are speaking out, Republicans are having a hard time moving this process forward. We can make a difference if we keep speaking out.

Medicaid covers one in five Americans. That's over 70 million people. Kids. Seniors. People with disabilities. As Senator Warnock says, "This is getting lost in the conversation. Medicaid cuts aren't just bad for folks who rely on it. They're bad for everyone. Hospitals will close and health insurance premiums will go up across the board."

Here's how Medicaid cuts will hurt kids with disabilities, even if the federal cuts themselves don't explicitly state that they will. Cuts to Medicaid mean that at the state level, the easiest cuts to make are optional services, like home-and- community-based care, which covers nurses and aides for direct care, occupational and physical therapy in schools, and most waiver services for children with medically complex needs and disabilities.

Erin says her daughter's healthcare remains in jeopardy with the proposals to cut Medicaid in the budget being presented in the Senate. She asks us, as siblings in Christ, to continue to advocate alongside her family by calling your Ssenators and helping them understand how critical Medicaid is to families like Erin's.

Because of pushback from people with disabilities, older adults, healthcare providers, and many more advocates, Congressional Republicans are feeling pressure to limit their proposals to cut Medicaid. Folks must continue to [let their Members of Congress know how painful](#),

[misguided, and cruel any cuts to Medicaid would be.](#)

God's love moves through the lives, stories, actions, and organizing of small groups of people doing the compassionate and right thing. Telling stories of hope and hardship open our hearts to the movement of God's inclusive, accessible, and welcoming Spirit to move us to build a more just world for all. Disabled people are sacred members of our beloved community. Now is the time to take action to ensure disabled people have the choice to belong in beloved community.

Action Item: Outreach and education efforts must now shift to the Senate to educate them on the negative effects of these cuts to Medicaid. Call your Senators and educate them on the importance of Medicaid for people with disabilities and their families and caregivers--you can use AUCD's [Medicaid fact sheet](#) and [talking points](#). Reach your Senators by calling the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund serves as the Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ.

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