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Medicaid Cuts Would Hit Children and Seniors



Sally Terranova and her son Colin rely on Medicaid to deal with his type 1 diabetes. (S. Terranova)



March 7, 2017

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Legislation being heard in the Missouri Senate this week would change the financing structure of the Medicaid program, and advocates say that could put the health of thousands of residents in danger, and create unnecessary financial risks for the state.

Currently, the federal government matches state funding to run Medicaid, but [SB 28](#) would change it to a

block grant program, meaning there would be a set amount of money each year.

Traci Gleason, The Missouri Budget Project's director of communications says if it's insufficient the state would have to either come up with the funding or cut services.

"Children make up about two-thirds of enrollees, and about another quarter are seniors and Missourians with disabilities," she said. "So when we think about cutting services or enrollment we really need to carefully consider who exactly are we talking about cutting from Medicaid."

The bill's author, Republican Senator David Sater, says it would bring personal accountability and responsibility into the program. President Trump has called for block grants to help reduce government spending.

Sally Terranova's 13-year old son was diagnosed last fall with type 1 diabetes. The St. Louis resident says after the shock wore off about whether or not he'd be OK, she started worrying about how she would be able to pay for treatment. She calls Medicaid a life-saver.

"Medicaid actually was great about covering services for him and it allowed both of us to kind of adjust to the disease and focus on his care and learning how to manage it, without having to worry about the financial side on top of that," she explained.

Gleason says cutting services to the state's most vulnerable citizens would put them at risk and would also hurt the economy.

"Really, if we put people in the position where they can't get the kind of preventative and regular care that they need, we are just putting off health care that's going to turn into an emergency," she added.

Several groups have testified in committee hearings in opposition to Sater's bill, saying the state would be rationing health care for the sick and vulnerable.

Veronica Carter, Public News Service - MO

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