

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

http://www.stltoday.com/opinion/mailbag/don-t-base-access-to-health-care-on-employment-status/article_c12accfa-5d7e-5212-bbb2-252e4eddd5a4.html

Don't base access to health care on employment status

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President Donald Trump speaks at H&K Equipment Company during a visit to promote his tax and economic plan, Thursday, Jan. 18, 2018, in Coraopolis, Pa. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Here we go again: This time, a Medicaid work requirement. The Trump administration could not repeal the Affordable Care Act, so it is trying another approach to take away health coverage ("Medicaid work mandate: Common-sense reform or unfair burden on poor?" Jan. 14).

About 74 million people, one-fifth of the country, are covered by Medicaid. However, most of the adults who would be subject to the work requirement are already employed. For millions too sick to search for a job but yet haven't gone through the lengthy process of qualifying for disability determination, meeting the work requirement would be difficult — and the loss of Medicaid devastating.

President Donald Trump's approach would result in booting poor and sick Americans from Medicaid rolls without helping them find work.

Isn't taking away struggling workers' health insurance cruel and even counterproductive? Health insurance is associated not only with better health but also with increased work capacity, which translates into higher wages and earnings.

Work requirements are based on myths: "The 'poor' don't want to work. One can get a well-paying job by snapping one's fingers. Presto! Job appears. Having a job is all it takes not to be poor."

Close to home, the Missouri GOP Senate, too, is attempting to create a waiver for Medicaid that calls for a work requirement and also slashes funds for the program by switching to block grants.

Access to health care should never be based on employment status. All Missourians no matter where they live, how much money they make, or how able they are to work deserve access to health care.

The addition of a work requirement moves us further away from the idea of health care as a right and toward an America that does not provide a safety net for the most vulnerable, including people with disabilities.

Ed Shew • Lake Saint Louis



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