



STATEMENT FROM THE CEO

Thousands of Our State's Seniors Will Suffer

The proposed *Better Care Reconciliation Act (Act)*, even as amended, knowingly sacrifices the well-being of our country's poorest and oldest Americans and persons with disabilities while benefitting the wealthiest among us. For many in Congress, however, protecting our vulnerable elderly and disabled citizens remains a priority and Democrats and moderate Republicans refuse to trade their well-being for political gain. Without sufficient votes in support of the latest Act, this legislation will not advance.

Here at home, Washingtonians have plenty to worry about and thousands will now rest easier but for how long. Surely, new proposals will come forward.

Today, over 65,000 Washingtonians depend on Medicaid to pay for critically important long term supports and services and nearly 90,000 individuals are projected to need these services in just over 10 years. Under the recently released Act, estimates suggest that by 2028, 22,588, or one-quarter, of our state's seniors will not have access to health care. Alternatively, every poor, older, or disabled Washingtonian relying on these services will experience a 25% reduction in either the number of caregiver hours covered or the scope of benefits needed to meet their needs. These are services that include help with daily activities that most of us take for granted. Thousands of our parents and grandparents depend on caregivers to get out of bed, help them dress, eat, bathe, brush their teeth, and assist with grocery shopping and getting to the doctor's office. Other services our state's seniors depend on include medically and nursing-oriented assistance with medications, skin and wound care, physical therapy, and 24/7 nursing care management. These vital services are provided in licensed care settings in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities or at home through adult day, home health or other in-home care.

Based on Washington State's Department of Social and Health Services' estimated impacts of the *Better Care Reconciliation Act*, the cuts and caps to Medicaid will cumulatively reduce federal funding to our state for long term care by nearly \$4 billion by 2028. This nearly \$4 billion 10-year loss in federal funding cannot be covered by our state. Funding for vital health care programs and affordable housing for seniors fails to pay for the increasing costs and the growing number of persons needing health care under our Medicaid programs.

Under today's federal-state payment partnership for Medicaid services, care facilities are closing or wings are being shut down because Medicaid funding does not adequately cover



operating costs. As a result, admissions are limited based on staffing and ability to safely provide care. This means that low income seniors are already being denied admission to certain skilled nursing facilities and assisted living communities. Cutting \$4 billion of federal money from our state's long term care budget means families will be asked to do more to care for their parents or grandparents. But this is already a care system under tremendous stress as family caregivers struggle to maintain their jobs and care for their own children, as well as their parents and grandparents. Without access to health care, low income seniors will languish in their own homes without meals or transportation and they will be at greater risk of falls and overall health failure. Indeed, many will likely suffer and die.

This is not a bill with heart; it's mean-spirited. At its core, it strips away the dignity of our most vulnerable citizens at a time when they need our help and compassion. It denies critically important health care to thousands of impoverished seniors in our state and to millions across this country. Without access to these lifelines, our parents and grandparents will have very few options for where they live and receive their care and some will be left without care all together.

The *Better Care Reconciliation Act*, even as amended, must be rejected. It takes our country down the wrong path at the absolute worst time with 10,000 baby boomers turning 65 every day and in need of health care at an alarming rate.

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Deb Murphy, Chief Executive Officer, LeadingAge Washington representing not-for-profit and mission focused senior housing and care organizations serving over 60,000 Washingtonians throughout our state.