

## **DISABILITY RIGHTS CALIFORNIA STATEMENT ON DEFEAT OF GRAHAM-CASSIDY BILL, ACA REPEAL, AND CUTS TO MEDICAID**

Disability Rights California celebrates the defeat of the latest Congressional attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and cut the Medicaid program, upon which millions of people with disabilities and others depend. Those who fought so hard against these efforts can celebrate for the moment. However, this fight is not over and we must continue to educate our legislators about the importance of these programs.

The Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson proposal, which was the Senate's latest attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and fundamentally change Medicaid, was declared dead on September 26, 2017. This means that Congress will not take up this bill immediately, or before September 30.

The Graham-Cassidy bill, like previous versions, would have been catastrophic for Californians with disabilities. If passed, these bills would have stripped requirements that states offer "essential health benefits" such as mental health and substance abuse treatment; eliminated protections for people with pre-existing conditions; and ended subsidies for health insurance exchanges and cost sharing reduction for low-income individuals. The California Department of Health Care Services estimated that California would have lost \$28 billion through 2026.

### **Bills would decimate Medicaid program**

These bills also would have decimated the Medicaid program, ending more than 50 years of a federal-state partnership ensuring health care coverage for low-income and disabled Americans. Instead, California's Medicaid program would face enormous cuts through block grants and per capita cuts, and the ACA's Medicaid expansion would end.

In California, 14.1 million people, including children and adults with disabilities and seniors, receive their health care services through Medi-Cal (California's Medicaid program). Almost 4 million people gained coverage through the ACA expansion of Medi-Cal. California's home and community-based services systems, such as In-Home Supportive Services and regional centers depend heavily on Medicaid funding for the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on these services to live in their homes

and communities. The health and economic consequences of this proposal for individuals with disabilities and our state would be devastating.

### **The threat to Medicaid is still real**

As Congress turns its attention to “tax reform”, we must remember that the threat to Medicaid and affordable health care is still very real. The ACA requires action by the Administration and by Congress to stabilize the insurance markets, effectively market for enrollment, and enforce the individual mandate. Without this action, fewer insurers will offer coverage and ACA premiums will increase.

Disability Rights California will join with consumers and families and with other advocates and partners to continue to educate policymakers and ensure that Californians with disabilities have access to critical health benefits.