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Governor's 1115 Waiver Strips Medicaid from Nearly 100,000

KENTUCKY- An additional 9,000 Kentuckians are estimated to lose Medicaid coverage based on Governor Bevin's most recent proposed changes to the Medicaid program under an 1115 Medicaid Waiver application being negotiated with federal administrators now. This adds to the nearly 86,000 estimated to lose coverage under the Governor's original 1115 Medicaid Waiver called Kentucky HEALTH. A process that is typically used for Medicaid expansion, the Governor's 1115 Waiver will actually *reduce* Medicaid coverage for nearly 100,000 needy Kentuckians, not bolster it.

Due to the proposed changes, the Administration opened a new 30-day comment period from July 3rd^h through August 2nd. In response, the Insure Kentucky Campaign asked Kentuckians to describe how the changes would impact themselves, their families and their communities. In total, we collected comments from nearly 1300 Kentuckians living in 108 of Kentucky's 120 counties.

One survey respondent, Bree Pearsall, a small farmer from Oldham county said, "I am worried that any missed step on our part could mean lack of coverage, which could mean health problems when we need care. As for my community, I'm worried about the 'slap on the wrist' nature of many of these requirements. We are talking about people not being able to go to the doctor for failing to sign up within a timeframe. It's cruel and bad public health policy."

Jason Bailey, Executive Director of the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy describes in further detail how devastating the changes would be. "The Governor's waiver sets up expensive and harmful barriers designed to cause many thousands of Kentuckians to lose coverage. We shouldn't be spending money to take our state backward. Kentucky should abandon the plan and continue the progress we are making thanks to Medicaid expansion—better health, greater economic security and new jobs for care providers."

"The waiver piles on complication after complication to coverage," said Rich Seckel, Director of the Kentucky Equal Justice Center, "with a startlingly punitive 'lock out' for not managing red tape—and no mention of accommodation for people who will find that hard. Instead of setting up consumers to fail, we should make programs work for working Kentuckians."

Dr. Sheila Schuster, Board Chair of Kentucky Voices for Health explains with urgency, "Never has the need for behavioral health services—especially for addiction treatment—been greater! The Commonwealth is in the midst of an opioid and heroin epidemic and many of those who are in treatment were able to access services through the Medicaid Expansion. The changes in the waiver application will make it much more difficult for Kentuckians to keep their Medicaid coverage and to continue their needed treatment."

Many survey respondents were concerned about the 1115 Waiver's "community engagement" hours that would be required in order for Kentuckians to receive health care. Greta Combs from Perry County said, "People who are already suffering from poverty, chronic untreated health problems, and lack of transportation do not need to be required to volunteer 20 hours a week to receive health care benefits."

Steve Growler, a survey respondent and concerned citizen from Madison County said, "It (the 1115 Waiver) does not impact me directly, though I would be embarrassed for our state and fellow citizens if such a program were enacted. It is demeaning to require the poor to "prove" themselves in this way. It is also arrogant by implying that those who have health care are somehow more worthy."

For more information about the proposed Medicaid changes and potential impact:

- View the official waiver application and modifications: <http://chfs.ky.gov/dms/kh>
- View comments from 1274 Kentuckians: <http://bit.ly/2u79kdz>
- View InsureKY Campaign partner comments on proposed modifications: <http://bit.ly/2u7Lz4T>
- View KVH comments submitted during the 2016 federal comment period: <http://bit.ly/2dcDgY9>



InsureKY is a statewide coalition of nonprofits formed to promote more affordable health insurance, better care, and stronger consumer protections for all Kentuckians. Kentucky Voices for Health is the 501c3 nonprofit organization coordinating this campaign. www.kyvoicesforhealth.org

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