

Amy Pauley

I was born and raised in Ashland, Missouri, and am now 20 years-old. I used to work as a waitress and was going to school to be an athletic trainer and physical therapist. When I was no longer covered under my father's insurance plan after turning 18, I was forced to find a private insurance plan to cover my health care expenses. My waitress job provided no health care coverage, and I quickly found out that I couldn't afford health care premiums. I thought that once I graduated I would be able to cover my health care premiums because since my earning potential would have been at least \$75,000.

But in 2001, things to a turn for the worse. I began to experience a number of health care problems, including migraines, anxiety, loss of vision, and temporary paralysis. I was diagnosed with heart defects that would eventually lead to heart disease. My health problems got so bad that I had to drop out of school and leave my job. Currently I am not working and I receive food stamps and general relief payments of \$9 a month from the State of Missouri. This is my only income.

I now get my health coverage through Medicaid. Without it I wouldn't get to see the specialists and doctors that I need to. I wouldn't be able to afford the medication to ease my pain and that makes it bearable for me to live. My family is unable to pay for any health care coverage for me or take on additional economic hardship.

Medicaid really matters to my community also. It creates jobs and helps our economy in our town. I don't know what will happen once doctors no longer take Medicaid and will have to move and find other business. It's sad. The more and more people that have lost their job in my town, the more we need the Medicaid program to help make ends meet for our families and friends. Now is the time to invest in the Medicaid program, not cut it back.

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