

## **Donna Lucero**

I was born in Albuquerque and raised in Taos. After graduating from Sandia View Academy in Corrales, I went to work for a number of different employers: for a kitchen cabinet manufacturer, a major home builder, and an apartment complex. I was employed the last 14 years by a Health Maintenance Organization in New Mexico working my way up from a customer service representative to a mid-management level position responsible for the oversight of the self-insured product line. I considered myself blessed at each of these jobs since they all provided health care coverage for myself and my daughter.

In April of 2002, I lost my job at the HMO based on employer discrimination. When I lost my job, I also lost health coverage. I looked into signing up for COBRA through my old health employer, but the price for COBRA and other health plans were out of reach. There was no way I could afford the cost of any health plan that was offered to me by private insurance carriers.

I applied for Medicaid for my family and was able to qualify and enroll my daughter. As an adult, I qualified for only the family planning portion of Medicaid, which I did not need because of my medical history.

Medicaid matters to me. It's a relief that at least my daughter is covered for any illness that she might encounter. She is a star student at her high school and being able to stay healthy is crucial for her to be able to continue learning at an optimal level. This would ensure that she is admitted to the top college of her choice and thus meet her plan of being a valuable, contributing member to society.

I am nervous what my family will do for health care coverage once my daughter turns eighteen in August and no longer is eligible for Medicaid. I am hoping by that time that I will find a job that provides health coverage, but my job search has been quite a struggle.

The recession has really hit my community hard. Right now, I'm living off of my savings while I look for work. I feel that our elected officials need to take families like mine into account and expand the Medicaid program to cover all uninsured families. Now is the time to invest in families like mine and expand, not cut back, the Medicaid program. I ask our elected officials to be proactive instead of reactive to the health of our citizens. I believe we need to look closely at pre-natal case management as well as reevaluate why some of our senior citizens must also rely on Medicaid to fill the gap in their health care needs to ensure we are being fiscally responsible with the Medicaid program.

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