

FMAP Sample Op-Ed

As our country's largest health insurer, Medicaid sustains the health system that we all rely on. Yet in **[your state]**, as in other states, Medicaid has become a target for budget cuts. These cuts, far from being just a matter of balancing numbers, jeopardize the health care of **[your state's]** families. To avert the very real disaster these cuts would bring, states like ours need the federal government to put families first and increase its support for Medicaid.

Medicaid, which is jointly funded by the federal government and the states, is our nation's best defense against uninsurance and underinsurance. Without Medicaid, hundreds of thousands of **[your state's residents]** would go without needed health coverage and care. States that have cut their Medicaid program have witnessed health care disasters like untreated diabetes, inability to get prescription drugs, and people going without cancer treatments. This shows that Medicaid really is an issue of life and death for families – and it matters to just about everyone living in the state, whether we realize it or not.

Even if you don't rely on Medicaid, you can bet that your community hospital and doctors' offices probably do. And even if you aren't covered by Medicaid now, you or someone you are close to may need Medicaid in the years to come. That's because Medicaid often picks up where Medicare leaves off, providing prescription drug and nursing facility coverage to millions of seniors who cannot pay out-of-pocket for those very costly services. And – especially in times of economic recession and rising job-loss rates – recently unemployed parents turn to Medicaid as the source of health coverage for their children. When Medicaid is cut, the health of our families is at stake.

Our state and local economies also need Medicaid and the important stimulus it brings. In **[your state]**, state dollars cover **[xx]** percent of Medicaid while federal dollars cover **[xx]** percent, and this combined investment spurs economic activity, job creation, and wages. **[For this information, visit <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/5974/fmappage.htm>]**. In federal fiscal year 2001, **[your state's]** investment in Medicaid generated over **[\$xx]** billion in increased output of goods and services and created almost **[xx,xxx]** jobs. **[For this information, visit <http://www.familiesusa.org/GoodMedicineReport.pdf>]**.

Nationwide, Medicaid is one of the most cost-effective sources of health coverage among both private and public plans. Spending growth in Medicaid and in private coverage is comparable – even though Medicaid often provides services to individuals who require more and costlier care. And Medicaid makes these services available without the coverage limitations and unaffordable cost-sharing that have become so common in private insurance.

With the current recession, **[your state]**, like other states, has been under pressure to dismantle our Medicaid program, and we have already caused a great deal of harm to our families. Yet the federal government can help **[your state]** and other states weather the

budget storm by increasing the federal share of Medicaid spending – also known as “FMAP,” or the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage. Boosting FMAP would provide states with additional support to put families first, protect Medicaid, and take advantage of its economic stimulus effects.

An investment in Medicaid is a wise investment in families and the long-term health of Americans, our health care system, and our state and local economies. By supporting an FMAP increase in a recent non-binding vote, **[your state]**’s Senators **[have spoken out on the importance of strengthening Medicaid in the long term OR failed to support an increase in funds for Medicaid]**. **[I applaud our Senators for this wisdom and ask them to continue supporting an FMAP increase when a binding vote reaches Congress OR I call on our Senators to reconsider their support for FMAP and support a program that millions rely on for essential health care services.]** **[To see how your Senator voted, see the attached voting tally.]** This is a vote that **[your state’s]** families are really counting on.