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**“Big Bill” is Far from Beautiful for People with Blindness and Low Vision**

The sweeping domestic policy package approved by the U.S. House of Representatives early this morning contains massive cuts and other changes to Medicaid that would have a disastrous impact on people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision. Low-income families and many other marginalized groups will be severely harmed if the bill is approved by the Senate and becomes law.

“It’s hard to overstate the damage these Medicaid cuts will cause for the population we serve,” said Denise Jess, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired. “This bill takes our nation’s health care safety net and other critical supports in the opposite direction from what is needed by millions of Americans.”

According to analysis by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, at least 15 million Americans will become uninsured by 2034 if this legislation is signed into law.

Among the bill’s major changes:

* According to CBO, it would reduce Medicaid funding by at least $716 billion, the largest cut in the program’s history.
* It imposes 80-hour-per-month work requirements for Medicaid members. An 11th hour change to the bill moved up the start date of these requirements from the beginning of 2029 to the end of 2026.
* It slashes $267 billion in federal spending for the SNAP food assistance program, which supports 42 million Americans facing food insecurity. It also creates enormous bureaucratic obstacles to enrolling and remaining in the program.
* It creates stiff penalties for states that offer coverage to undocumented residents.

“On average, people who are blind or low vision are much worse off economically than the general population and suffer much higher rates of physical and mental health conditions,” Jess said. “If these cuts and policy changes are enacted, the situation for the people our organization serves will get significantly worse. They are already facing too many systemic obstacles; adding more would be devastating.”

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Founded in 1952, the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired promotes the dignity and empowerment of people in Wisconsin who are blind or low vision through advocacy, education and vision services. To learn more about the Council, visit www.WCBlind.org.