

For Immediate Release
February 19, 2011

Thousands Gather in 17 Idaho Cities: Call Medicaid Cuts Morally and Economically Destructive



Shocked at the prospect that the Idaho Legislature may eliminate Medicaid-funded services, thousands of Idahoans gathered today in 17 Idaho cities in Idaho to emphasize how important those services are to Idaho's economy. Speakers at the rallies shared stories about how Medicaid has protected their freedom and independence. They also urged lawmakers to consider a small tax increase which would be far better for the economy than the long-term consequences of eliminating these services. While estimates of cuts keep changing each day, legislators are contemplating \$166 million in cuts (\$50 million in state funds which trigger the withdrawal of another \$116 million in federal funds).

“In each city, local citizens want to put a face on how Medicaid has helped people with developmental disabilities and mental illness gain their freedom, independence and economic self-sufficiency,” explained D.J. Stephens, President of PCS Families of Idaho who helped put together the rally in Nampa. “We are confident that if legislators truly understand the consequences of cutting these services, they will support options to protect them.” PCS stands for Personal Care Services, one of the Medicaid-funded services that may be eliminated.

“Developmental disabilities and mental illness can strike any family,” said Katherine Hansen, President of the Idaho Association of Developmental Disabilities Agencies (IADDA). “Everyone agrees that Idahoans have a right to live in their own community and to achieve their potential. What most people do not know is that the funds we contribute to Medicaid through our tax dollars make this possible.” Hansen added. “We are glad so many people are willing to share their stories and make the connection between what we value about living in Idaho and Medicaid-funded services.”

Paula Marcotte, President of the Mental Health Providers Association of Idaho said “three weeks ago, over 1,000 people came to Boise to share their stories with legislators. Since so many more people wanted to come and show their support we agreed to help them put together these local rallies and to reach out to legislators in their community,” Marcotte explained.

Details of rally near you on reverse

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Medicaid Matters Rally in Lewiston

Contact:

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Location:

The rally in Lewiston was held at Brackenbury Square

Speakers. The following are the speakers at the rally in Lewiston. Copies of their remarks are attached. Please contact us if you would like to arrange an interview.

1. Linda Breedlove- Linda is a mother of an adult child who has developmental disabilities. She has also worked as a developmental therapy technician for 8 ½ years.
2. Chuck Whitman- Director North Central Idaho Foodbank and serves as a Chairman of the Board member for Opportunities Unlimited, Inc.
3. Herb Boreson- Lifelong member of the Lewis-Clark Valley. I am currently a volunteer on five different boards. I serve as president of the Beautiful Downtown Lewiston Board, vice chairman of the Life Choices Clinic Board, board member of Downtown Lewiston Parking Committee, member of the Emergency Medical Services Board, and member of Faith Tabernacle Church Board.

The MC of the rally is Shawna Springer who currently works as a Developmental Specialist and has over 12 years of experience working in the DD field. She has also previously worked as a Psychosocial Rehabilitation provider with individuals who have a mental illness diagnosis.

Attached is the ***Medicaid Matters - Position Paper*** which provides a summary of the cuts in Medicaid currently contemplated in the Idaho Legislature and the consequences of those cuts.

Additional resources can be found at www.medicaidmattersinidaho.com including:

- *Videos* of individuals who receive services, run businesses that hire people receiving services, family members, church members, providers, etc... Please contact us if you would like to arrange and interview.
- *Medicaid Services Save Idaho Money* (analysis by Disability Rights Idaho)
- *Position Paper on Medicaid Cuts* (analysis by Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities)
- *The Medicaid Multiplier Explained* (analysis by David Lehman, former aide to Gov. Kempthorne)

