

WHY HEALTHCARE MATTERS:
STORIES FROM
IDAHOANS



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IDAHO CHILDREN ON MEDICAID



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Kristin's Story

My name is Kristin, I live in Eagle with my husband and two daughters, Lea, 9 and Eowyn 5. They love playing with our animals, riding horses, swimming, and exploring outside. My husband operates a small business that his family started in the 1970s. I stay at home to care for our daughters because Eowyn has extensive health care needs that require me to be home with her, which I would not be able to do without the support of Medicaid.



“Medicaid saved Eowyn’s life and has helped her grow into an independent healthy girl.”

When Eowyn was born, she had many health conditions and she was not expected to survive. She lived through a heart surgery and a stroke that caused her to live with cerebral palsy. Now, Eowyn is doing great because she can receive the care she needs through Medicaid. Since she was born, Medicaid covers what our insurance wouldn't. This allows her to receive many services that help her to thrive despite her disabilities. She attends a school with a program for the people who are deaf and blind. Between her medications and feeding therapy, she only needs a gastronomy tube for water. She used to need it for all of her nutrition. She receives occupational and physical therapy which produced a love for running! Speech therapy and sign language help her learn how to communicate. Our whole family works with a tutor to learn sign language so we can communicate with Eowyn more easily.

If we didn't have Medicaid we would be financially devastated and bankrupt. Eowyn's medical care is so extensive that we would not be able to ensure she has these services. Medicaid saved Eowyn's life and is helping her grow into an independent healthy girl. She may have disabilities, but Medicaid paves a path for her of health and progress.

Amy's Story



Amy lives with her husband and five daughters in Buhl, Idaho. They have a very active family and enjoy watching their girls play school sports. They work hard to do things together and thrive despite the extensive needs of their youngest daughter, Audrey. They are a middle class family that's been fortunate to have decent employment and employer provided insurance. Medicaid has helped them avoid medical bankruptcy by covering the medical needs of Audrey that their primary insurance wouldn't. Because Audrey has Down syndrome, autism, hearing loss, and is nonverbal, having access to healthcare is critical. She has also fought through seizures and battled cancer in 2012.

“ Medicaid has been a lifesaver for Audrey. Without these supports, Audrey wouldn't live long.”

Medicaid helped cover Audrey's cancer treatments and makes it possible for her to be tested regularly to ensure she is still in remission. She has an oral aversion and can only get her nutrition through a feeding tube. Their primary insurance covers the equipment, while Medicaid covers the expensive supplemental nutrition. Audrey's conditions also require extensive treatments, therapies, and medications.

Amy, Audrey and their family live in a rural part of Twin Falls County where Idaho Medicaid provides health coverage to 33% of children. With Medicaid, they have access to Audrey's medical care and therapies. These services help Audrey to communicate, socialize, function and thrive in the community. Cuts to Medicaid would disproportionately harm their rural community by reducing payments to providers or rolling back eligibility for the program. This could cause many healthcare providers to shut their doors or stop providing services to Medicaid recipients. With healthcare services already limited, this would put Audrey at significant risk and would make it difficult to continue her necessary services. Medicaid has been a lifesaver for Audrey. Without these supports, Audrey wouldn't live long.

Sarah's Story



My name is Sarah and my family was born and raised in Idaho. We live in Meridian, where my husband does automotive reconditioning and I work at a nonprofit where

I help to provide resources to families with children with disabilities. Truman is our youngest at twelve years old and he requires around the clock care. Our family loves to go to sporting events, the dog park, and swimming. Medicaid makes it possible to do things together as a family by providing supports in our home.

“Medicaid supports Truman’s quality of life. With his extensive needs, he would deteriorate without his services and we would be in a financial crisis.”

Truman was born premature, weighing 1 pound 10 ounces and spent the first 120 days of his life in the NICU. This automatically qualified him for Idaho Medicaid as secondary coverage. He needs a feeding tube for nutrition, and receives physical and occupational therapy. He is non-ambulatory and requires 100% assistance with a manual wheelchair and hydraulic lift. He can’t verbalize, so he receives therapy to work on developing an eye-gaze tracking system. A personal care aide comes to our home throughout the day, which allows me to work and contribute financially to our family. These are just the few of the services he needs but there are multiple other surgical and health procedures that allow him to remain in our home, participate in and engage in the community.

Medicaid supports Truman’s quality of life. Due to his extensive needs he would deteriorate without his services and our family would be in financial crisis. If anything ever happened to my husband and me, he may have to live in an institutional setting. Our child should be able to live in his home, with his brothers and be cared for by his family. He should be able to be a part of the community, make friends and live his life connected to people who love him.

Sandy's Story

My name is Sandy and I live in Boise. I am 61, disabled, and the guardian of a teenager with disabilities. Medicaid plays an active role in our lives and makes it possible for me to continue to care for her by providing the treatments and medications I need. We try to live the best life we can by taking family road trips and walks on the river, but due to our limitations it is getting increasingly difficult to do both.



“Janoxia and I have a very limited income. Medicaid makes it possible for us to have our health care needs met so that we can function and be together.”

Thirteen years ago I took guardianship of my late best friend's granddaughter because no one in her family could. I have raised and cared for her like my own. Janoxia is a special girl. She has sensory issues, ADHD, an attachment disorder, and Asperger's. She struggles daily to do simple tasks like socialize and get herself ready in the morning. Medicaid provides a personal care aide, “Grandma Anna”, and she comes over every morning to help Janoxia get ready for school. I wouldn't know what to do if I ever lost her support. Janoxia has a habilitative interventionist come a few times a week to take her out and about. This helps her know how to socialize and contribute to our community. We also have services that provide me with supports to be best parent I can for her special needs. Having these supports through Medicaid has also helped Janoxia to be successful in school.

Janoxia and I have a very limited income. Medicaid makes it possible for us to have our health care needs met so that we can function and be together. I will not always be around to care for her and it's important that she continue to have services and supports so that she can remain a healthy, functioning member of our community.

Sylvia's Story



Sylvia is an Idahoan who lives with her family in Twin Falls. She is no stranger to hard work and spent years working on a dairy. Her family enjoys spending time together by going on walks, to the park, and swimming. Health insurance is important when you work in a labor intensive industry, yet, it is not something that Sylvia has been able to afford. Fortunately, her children are able to receive Idaho Medicaid. This is incredibly important for her youngest daughter, Jade, who was born with cerebral palsy about a year ago.

“Medicaid helps my family get the proper care they need.”

When Jade was born she wouldn't open her left eye, kept her left arm clenched extremely tightly, and appeared to have sensory issues. Due to the support of Medicaid and her pediatrician's diligence she was tested early and ultimately diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Jade's diagnosis qualified her to enroll in the Idaho Infant and Toddler program, which provides family support for children with disabilities. Jade started physical therapy and has gained more mobility with her arm. Doctors say she will need consistent therapies, services and medical support as she grows.

“Medicaid helps my family get the proper care we need. We have four kids and want ensure they are healthy and can get care when they are sick. Medicaid helps us do that. It gives Jade the best chance of learning to walk, talk, and function normally.”

Christina's Story



Christina and Carlos live in Jerome with their three children Kiersten, 10, Emanuel, 9, and Uriel, 4. Carlos works on a dairy, 14 hours a day for 6 days a week. Christina recently got promoted and has a full time job. Even though Christina and Carlos work very hard, they strive to do many things together as a family like cooking, family outings, and they declared Sunday “family” day. Growing up, Christina and Carlos didn’t have a high quality of life or access to healthcare. “Our quality of life was very poor. Neither of us received hardly any medical care. I was fifteen by the time I was able to go to the dentist and nineteen by the time I was able to get glasses.”

“We work so hard to provide for our family, to give our kids a better life than the one we had growing up. Medicaid is helping us do that.”

Each of their children has a medical condition. Kiersten grows too fast for her age and is pre-diabetic. Emanuel has behavioral and mental health conditions. Uriel has had severe asthma since he was born. These health problems have caused the need for trips to the emergency room, therapies, and medications. Despite all of their challenges, they consider themselves fortunate because they have Medicaid and it has literally saved their children’s lives. They can go to the dentist, eye doctor, and pediatrician to get the services, medications and therapies they need. A privilege that Christina and Carlos didn’t have as children. Medicaid keeps their family from being financially devastated by incurring an incredible amount of medical debt.

“We pay for everything ourselves; daycare, food, and housing expenses. The only assistance we receive is through Medicaid. It truly is a blessing in our lives. We work so hard to provide for our family, to give our kids a better life than the one we had growing up. Medicaid is helping us do that.”

Caitlin's Story



Caitlin and her husband live in Kimberly, Idaho with their three kids. One of their children, Scarlette, was born with disabilities. She has many medical conditions and was born blind, is missing three parts of her brain, has Cerebral Palsy, and multiple hormonal deficiencies. Scarlette is 100% dependent on others to live. The first few years of her life, she had many hospital visits and surgeries. Now, aged four and half, Scarlett is stable and hasn't been to the hospital in over a year due to Medicaid provided healthcare.

“Scarlett is stable and hasn't been to the hospital in over a year due to Medicaid provided healthcare.”

Scarlette goes to the Idaho School for Deaf and Blind and is enrolled in its preschool program. She receives weekly therapies, a feeding tube, and daily medications. These are vital to keeping her alive. If she were to miss even one medication, she would not live longer than a week. Her wheelchair helps her to be able to get around, play, and enjoy being a kid until the day she can walk.

Caitlin is an IT technician but has been unable to work due to Scarlette's extensive needs. She barely has time to sleep and taking on a job outside the home is not a feasible option for the family. They live paycheck to paycheck and would be homeless or filing for bankruptcy if it wasn't for Medicaid. They live in a rural part of Idaho where access to healthcare is scarce. Sometimes it's challenging to get Scarlette adequate healthcare. Medicaid helps to ensure that the life saving care she receives is covered so that she can continue to grow and have the best chance at life.

Kurstin's Story



Kurstin is a single mom with four children Carson, Kira, Cohen, and Yuri. They live in Nampa, ID. Kurstin is a hard worker and is doing everything she can to provide a

bright future for family. She attends college and is an intern VISTA at the Idaho After school Network. Despite being busy, she strives to do things together as a family like barbecuing, camping, movie nights, and evening walks with garbage bags to pick up litter. Going to school and being a single mom is not easy, especially when you have health conditions and a lack of health insurance.

“Kids are going to be kids. They get sick and break bones. It’s all a part of growing up. I don’t know what I would do without Medicaid to help my kids be healthy.”

Kurstin has a pre-existing health condition called celiac disease as well as severe hip problems that require regular monitoring and medications. She needs long-term health insurance to stay well and avoid medical bankruptcy. “When my celiac’s disease goes untreated, I get very sick. Which is scary, because I need to be healthy to care for my kids.” Health coverage is important for her children as well, “I have been blessed to have healthy kids, but they still need to go to the doctor regularly.” Not only has Medicaid provided them with doctor and dental appointments to keep them healthy, it has provided health care in emergencies. Carson was so sick this last winter that Kurstin had to carry him into the doctor’s office. Cohen has had multiple broken bones and Yuri spent a week in the hospital as an infant.

Medicaid has been a much needed safety net for the health and growth of Kurstin’s children. “Kids are going to be kids, they get sick and break bones. It’s all a part of growing up. I don’t know what I would do without Medicaid to help my kids be healthy.”

Julie's Story



My name is Julie and my family lives in Nampa, Idaho. My husband has a good job and works hard to support us and our six children. My youngest children are fraternal twins, two years old, and have Down syndrome. Milo and Charlie are on Idaho Medicaid and it has been vital in helping them to be healthy. Milo was born with intestinal issues and at twenty-months-old had problems with his ears. He was able to get both corrected with surgery and is now a thriving toddler.

“They have so much to offer, they just need a little extra help. Medicaid is giving Milo and Charlie the chance to reach their full potential.”

Milo and Charlie have to visit the endocrinologist regularly due to thyroid issues. They also go to speech and play therapy every week where they learn life skills. I have watched my boys' skills progress immensely with walking, crawling, feeding, and following instructions. They love their therapy sessions and they love to learn! The positive benefits from their therapies and treatments have manifested in our home. The providers have been incredibly helpful by educating me on raising children with Down syndrome. They have helped me learn how Milo and Charlie need special guidance because of their low muscle tone and other physical limitations. I'm learning how to take lessons from therapy and teach them at home.

When my twins receive services, our family and community benefits. They will reach their full potential if we continue to have these Medicaid provided supports and services. They will be able to grow up as contributing members of society. In this day and age, individuals with Down syndrome are now owning businesses and going to college. They have so much to offer, they just need a little extra help. Medicaid is giving Milo and Charlie the chance to reach their full potential.

IDAHOANS WITH DISABILITIES



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Ahniah's Story

My name is Ahniah and I live in Boise. When I was fifteen years old, I was in a horrible car accident that I almost didn't survive. I recovered after many surgeries and rehabilitative services, but I was paralyzed. For the rest of my life I will need assistance, and Medicaid is an essential support. I have an in home aide that helps me to live independently. I take medications, use a wheelchair, and go to physical therapy. My quality of life depends on these services. Being able to continue to live independently in my own home means I have the freedom to be active and contribute to my community. Being independent enhances the quality of my life and those around me.



“I was only supposed to live seven years post injury, and it's been 31. I would not be alive today without the support of Medicaid. I am incredibly grateful for each day of my life, and Medicaid is helping me live life to the fullest.”

After my accident, I was able to graduate from high school and go onto college. During college, I had the opportunity to write for the Idaho Statesman about wheelchair accessibility of public places. I was also editor-in-chief of “Able Together,” an on-line magazine. I worked for parks and recreation in Boise to determine handicap accessibility in public parks. I have learned French, Spanish, and have tutored English as a second language at the College of Western Idaho. I am an advocate for others with disabilities and have spoken at events to talk about the value of Medicaid. I love our state and I strive to be active in making our communities better.

I was only supposed to live seven years post injury, and it's been thirty-one. I would not be alive today without the support of Medicaid. I am incredibly grateful for each day of my life, and Medicaid is helping me live life to the fullest.

Ginny & Skipper's Story



Ginny has lived in Driggs, Idaho for many years. She is widely recognized as a respected community leader, volunteer, and advocate. Despite the sometimes harsh winters on the edge of the Tetons, Ginny will not be moving anywhere very soon. As the only remaining family member left to support her brother, Skipper, who has a developmental disability, Ginny is deeply committed to his day-to-day care. The rural community of Driggs has welcomed and supported her brother. Skipper was institutionalized in the State of New Jersey for twenty years. Ginny moved him to Idaho in 2000. Medicaid helps with all of Skipper's needs including housing, clothing, food, medical and dental care.

“Medicaid makes it possible for Ginny to care for Skipper and be a part of his life.”

Skipper is very active and it takes a lot of people around him to keep him safe. The community does what it can to help, but he is 68 years old. It's up to Ginny to bathe him, brush his teeth, and help him with all of his daily needs because he isn't capable of handling them on his own. Skipper was born with brain damage and he spends his weekdays in a group home. A police officer who suffered a gunshot wound to the head and a student who was injured during a football game are among the community members of his group home. They all need permanent care. Skipper goes to Ginny's home on the weekends.

At 65 years old, Ginny works three jobs and spends most of her income on Skipper, foregoing many of her own needs. She would be unable to work if he had to live with her full time, which would put them into financial crisis. Medicaid makes it possible for Ginny to care for Skipper and be a part of his life.

James' Story



James was raised in eastern Idaho in a hard-working family, and as members of the Church of Latter Day Saints. Through his faith he was taught the value of honesty and hard work. He was born prematurely at a time when iron lungs were in use, which led to problems with his vision, a challenge that remains to this day. He also has cerebral palsy and bipolar disorder. He was still able to finish college, keep a keen mind, and is skilled at expressing himself.

“He is very passionate about his ability to serve others and be a community leader, and Medicaid is helping him accomplish that.”

James has a long history of working, living independently in community settings and being a community leader, but he now lives in a Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation facility in Blackfoot, Idaho. James has very limited mobility and utilizes a chair to get around. Medicaid provides these supports and makes it possible for him to live in the facility and get out into the community, where he spends a good deal of time working to benefit others with disabilities. He helps link them to services and resources, organizes social events and serves on boards and commissions. He is very passionate about his ability to serve others and be a community leader, and Medicaid is helping him accomplish that.

Medicaid provided services are valuable to James and others like him. He worries about Medicaid cuts, “I’m not so much concerned about myself, but for my friends, people with disabilities, and the elderly. I have been in and out of institutions throughout my life due to surgeries and what not. There are people in the community utilizing Idaho Medicaid to live in their own homes and they could lose that independence. We need to make sure they continue to receive Medicaid services.”

Ian's Story



Ian is tall, well-spoken and his intelligence stands out when he speaks. He lives in Boise, works part time and will graduate from Boise State University in the fall of 2017.

“I was diagnosed with autism at the age of 7, but I’ve needed support my whole life. Medicaid gives me independence.”

Ian receives “Self Direction” under the Developmentally Disabled Medicaid waiver in Idaho. This includes 10 hours of supports a week such as meal prep, laundry and other home services. He also receives funds for transportation to work and school.

“I need these services. I am able to learn, gain more independence, and live life to the fullest.”

Keeping to his work and school schedule would be very difficult for him without transportation through Medicaid. “I would not be as functional in the home or as confident on my own. It would be a lot harder to be involved in the community without Medicaid.”

The therapy Ian receives is also very important, “It gives me the tools to not worry about the future. I need these supports for my mental health particularly when I am in a crisis.” According to Ian’s therapists, Ian is 15-20% away from being completely independent. He has a goal to not need Medicaid funding, but first he will need to land a full time job and develop a little more confidence.

As Ian gains more independence he feels compelled to help others. “If Medicaid was cut I would not be as proficient... I want to be an advocate for myself and for others. It is important to be a voice for those who can’t.” Having Medicaid means everything to Ian, “I need these services. I am able to learn, gain more independence, and live life to the fullest.”

Sandra's Story



Sandra lives in Idaho Falls and was born with Hydrocephalus. This is when fluid builds up around the brain, expanding the skull, creating a lot of pressure. Consequently, she must take medication to reduce the pressure in her head and to protect against seizures.

Sandra has had a disability her whole life, she qualified for Social Security, and a Medicaid Developmental Disability waiver with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. She now lives in a Certified Family Home with other adults with disabilities.

“Without Medicaid...I wouldn't have the job coach I need to succeed at work and I wouldn't have the transportation to get to work...I just wouldn't be where I am today.”

The home provides a room, meals, and other services that allow Sandra to function with some independence. She and others in the Certified Family Home do activities together and recently went camping.

Sandra attends a day program where she engages in social activities with other adults with disabilities in a therapeutic setting. She also has access to a job coach and transportation to her work at Kentucky Fried Chicken. Sandra's job coach is very helpful in assisting her to adjust to the demands of her work place.

All of these opportunities for Sandra to be able to move around in the community, to address her health care needs, to socialize, recreate, and to work come as a result of Medicaid. And the services allow Sandra to have a full life. “I love Medicaid. Without Medicaid I wouldn't be able to work at KFC. I wouldn't have the job coach I need to succeed at work and I wouldn't have transportation to get to work. I wouldn't be able to get the medications I need or go to my medical appointments. I just wouldn't be where I am today.”

Noll's Story



My name is Noll and I live in Boise, ID. Idaho has been my home my whole life. In true Idaho fashion, I love the outdoors. I strive to be active by going camping, fishing, swimming, and I've even been skydiving. I am very independent, yet I live with disabilities that require assistance in my daily life.

Medicaid provides me a wheelchair and a trapeze device to help me in and out of bed. I am currently on the Self Direction program, an option for people on the Developmental Disabilities Waiver. This allows me to choose what services and supports I need. I have a personal care aide that comes to my house every day to help

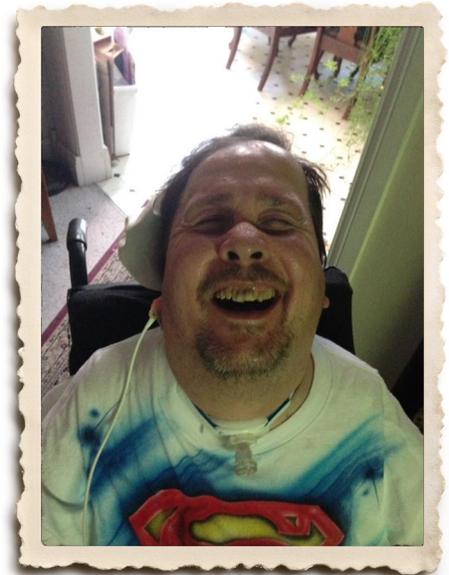
“Medicaid makes it possible for me to participate in community activities, have my medications and physical therapy. Medicaid provides me with the support I need to be independent and in charge of my health.”

with daily tasks like cooking, cleaning, and caring for myself. My aides provide me with transportation to appointments and activities in the community. I'm also able to keep in contact with my family members in Twin Falls. An aide can drive me there and stay overnight because my father's home is not wheelchair accessible.

Medicaid makes it possible for me to participate in community activities, have my medications and receive physical therapy. Medicaid provides me with the support I need to be independent and in charge of my health. Medicaid cuts would be devastating for me as I don't have the funds to cover these supports. I fear I would have to go to a nursing facility and I have no idea if the state would help to cover the costs.

I really want you to put yourself in another person's shoes. Imagine that you are in a wheelchair and need someone to help you with everything. Now imagine that support person is taken away, but you are still in a wheelchair. How are you going to be able to care for yourself?

Gabe's Story



Gabe is a 44 year old Boise resident, who loves fishing, live music, sports, and people. He suffered a pre-natal stroke and was born with an intellectual disability, epilepsy and cerebral palsy. At 22 he underwent surgery on his spine to release pressure on his spinal cord.

Complications from the surgery left him completely paralyzed from the neck down. He requires 24-hour, one to one care. Medicaid pays for people to come into the Baugh home and help Gabe. At night he is monitored. If these services did not happen, Gabe would not survive for long.

“I would not be able to take care of him on my own. These services allow me to go to work and to sleep. They allow Gabe to live and have a life.”

Medicaid makes it possible for Gabe to go places on his own without his parents' help. “I would not be able to take care of him on my own. These services allow me to go to work and to sleep,” Gabe’s father, Jim, said with a slight smile. “They allow Gabe to live and have a life.” Gabe’s mother also has a disability and cannot contribute much to his care. Jim is the Executive Director of DisAbility Rights of Idaho. He is one of the most knowledgeable people in the state regarding services for people with disabilities and the role of Medicaid.

If Medicaid funding were cut or reduced, Gabe’s parents have no idea how his needs would be met. “There is nothing else available for his care. Nursing homes would not accept Gabe, because his level of care is above nursing home levels. Most likely he would have to be placed in a long term acute care hospital which would cost 3 times as much. Medicaid has been working for 50 years and it is better than any other program. It provides services to people with disabilities that are not covered by any other program or policy.”

Erick's Story



Erick lives in Idaho Falls with his father. Erick is a highly respected advocate in the disability community. He served on many boards and organizations that work to ensure Idahoans with disabilities get the supports they need. Erick lives with cerebral palsy and relies on Medicaid to be able to live at home with his father. It is literally his life line. Without Medicaid he would have to move to an institution. "I would die if I had to go to a nursing home. It would kill my spirit, because I would lose my freedom."

"I would die if I had to go to a nursing home. It would kill my spirit, because I would lose my freedom."

Home and community based services provided by Medicaid allow Erick to contribute to his community. He has power wheelchair, which enhances his mobility. He goes to weekly physical, occupational, and speech therapies that help him be more independent. Erick's father is unable to drive, so Medicaid helps provide transportation to doctors and therapy appointments. It covers his expensive medications and other medical needs. Medicaid makes it possible for him to go to a rehabilitation center in Utah that teaches independent living skills. He learned how to do many things like get in and out of his wheelchair, the shower, dress, and take care of other personal care needs.

Medicaid allows Erick to grow and progress through crucial supports, medications, and the ability to live at home independently with his father. It supports him in being an active voice for others in the community. Erick is concerned about the possibility of Medicaid funding being cut, for himself and others who rely on those services. "If Congress chooses to do a block grant or cap, it's like they are trying to put a cap on me...you can't grow anymore...your total freedom is gone."

Larkin's Story



My name is Larkin and I live in Moscow, ID with my wife, Jen. We both have Cerebral Palsy, which is a developmental disability. I work in Science and Engineering, and my wife works at the University of Idaho. We both like our jobs and being able to be a part of the community. Medicaid provides me with the support I need to live independently, so I can get around the house and get to work. Without Medicaid, I probably would not be able to keep my job.

“Medicaid makes it possible for me to live independently, to work and pay taxes. I am just like everybody else and want to be able to enjoy life in my home with my wife.”

I receive Medicaid for workers so it provides insurance to help pay for some of our expenses that typical insurance does not. This makes it possible for us to afford prescriptions and other medical costs. Medicaid provides services so that a personal care aide can come into our home and help with daily needs. They help with getting ready in the morning, using the restroom, repositioning myself so I don't get sores from sitting in one position too long, and food prep. I also receive help with transportation because my wife and I share a vehicle. Idaho winters make transportation extremely difficult on both of us, but through Medicaid I have someone to drive me to work.

Without these supports I would have to move in with family members or a nursing home. At 36 years old, I feel pretty young for a nursing home. Medicaid makes it possible for me to live independently, to work and pay taxes. I am just like everybody else and want to be able to enjoy life in my home with my wife.

IDAHOANS IN THE COVERAGE GAP



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Bryn's Story



Bryn is a 41-year-old Idahoan with a love for Idaho's outdoors. As an avid recreationalist, she loves her small rural community of Sandpoint, Idaho. She owns her home and small business. Bryn was living the Idaho dream, until recently, she started experiencing the nightmare of what it's like to live in rural Idaho without health coverage. She applied for a tax credit through the healthcare exchange but after business deductions, her annual income was too low to qualify and she was unable to afford the premiums. She is in the healthcare coverage gap.

“Lack of access to affordable care is causing Bryn to lose, not only her sight, but the life she has built.”

Bryn has always been very active and healthy. Yet, there are times when even the healthiest people have medical emergencies that are beyond their control. In February, Bryn's retina detached in her left eye causing her to have emergency surgery. After the first initial surgery, her retina detached again and again causing her to have five emergency surgeries in four months.

Due to long recoveries from her surgeries and impacts to her vision, she has not been able to work this year. Her medical bills are piling up, depleting her savings. She doesn't want to move away from her beloved home in Idaho, but she needs affordable medical care. She should not have to move away from her home and community to get the healthcare she needs to be healthy and work.

She has lost her sight in her left eye and has another surgery scheduled in October. She can't afford the surgery, but at the same time, she needs the surgery to live a productive life. Lack of access to affordable care is causing Bryn to lose, not only her sight, but the life she has built.

Cameron's Story



I am a 25-year-old husband and father attending BYU-Idaho in Rexburg, Idaho. My wife and I are both full-time students and plan to graduate in 2018.

Last semester I volunteered two hours a week in the Madison Memorial emergency department and am currently pursuing a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing.

We moved here in hopes of improving the quality of our lives by seeking out an education. We applied for healthcare coverage through Medicaid and have been greatly blessed by having it. Our son, Solomon, is two years old and has since been hospitalized twice for respiratory attacks. Without Medicaid, we would be in severe financial jeopardy.

“In the interest of helping good-willed students become self-sufficient tax-payers of the future, please close the coverage gap for those who truly need it.”

I was raised in a politically conservative home and I hold true to those ideals today. The belief that runs the deepest in me is the idea that hard work and ingenuity can lead to improved life circumstances. That is why I was greatly disappointed to discover that my income is limited to \$365 a month in order to maintain eligibility for Medicaid benefits. If I make more than that amount, my wife and I will be pushed into the health insurance coverage gap and become uninsured.

There are many hard-working students, like us, that fall into this gap and who are damned to poverty by the stringent income limits set by the state. Change may not happen while we are in college and in this situation. However, I feel the pain of the many families of BYU-Idaho who come to Rexburg seeking advancement only to be discouraged from working in order to maintain healthcare benefits. In the interest of helping good-willed students become self-sufficient tax-payers of the future, please close the coverage gap for those who truly need it.

Jenny's Story



My name is Clella. My daughter-in-law Jenny, lived in Idaho Falls, Idaho. Jenny and my son, Jason, were hard workers, contributed to their community, and were loved by family and friends. Jenny was a caring and compassionate person, the light of our son's life. Jenny had asthma, and because she

was in the coverage gap, she did not have access to the correct kind of inhalers. As a result, on September 1st, 2015, she had a severe asthma attack, stopped breathing, was declared brain-dead 5 days later, and became an organ donor.

“Jenny’s lack of access to comprehensive healthcare caused her death.”

Jenny and Jason struggled to make ends meet for years, even though they were always working. Jenny earned her GED in Idaho Falls, and worked as a caregiver, most recently for her grandmother. When grandmother passed, Jenny got a part-time job at U-Haul. Jason had struggled to find full-time employment and was thrilled when he landed a full-time job that would provide insurance for him and Jenny. Their insurance took effect the day Jenny went into the hospital. However, in the months before Jenny's death, her asthma had worsened and, without access to a specialist to treat her asthma, she was getting inhalers from a local community clinic when she could, or buying them from friends. Jenny and Jason did not realize that those inhalers were actually worsening her condition.

On the day Jenny died, she went to work in the morning, but came home after lunch, not feeling well. We now know that she was suffocating – her inhalers had stopped working. She was able to get a neighbor to drive her to the hospital. That drive took 3 minutes and 52 seconds. By the time they arrived, she had stopped breathing. Jenny's lack of access to comprehensive healthcare caused her death.

Anna's Story

My name is Anna, and I live in Garden Valley, Idaho with my husband and four children. I'm sharing my story with you in the hope that you will find a solution for Idaho families like mine who are living in the healthcare gap. My husband and I own an auto body shop, and my husband works incredibly hard to provide for our family of six. Our business is only 6 years old, and we are still working to build it and produce a steady income. I work part time cleaning a doctor's office in order to help us get by.

“We work so hard to provide for our family, yet we have to ignore our own health concerns because we can't afford health insurance.”

My husband and I were shocked to find out we do not qualify for the state health insurance exchange. We also do not qualify for Medicaid. Our children are covered by Medicaid, and we are thankful, but we are living on the edge. If my husband or I have a serious health concern this year, we could end up not being able to financially provide for our children.

There is a certain peace of mind that exists with health insurance; it is the peace of mind that an unexpected health problem will not lead to devastating financial ruin. We work so hard to provide for our family, yet we have to ignore our own health concerns because we can't afford health insurance. We also can't afford prescriptions we've been prescribed due to the steep out of pocket cost.

Please consider families, like mine, with parents that are working hard to provide for their children. We are just trying to make our way in the world, to survive, and to raise our children right. Affordable health insurance represents the only way to accomplish those goals.

Dannielle's Story



My name is Dannielle. My family and I recently moved from Albion Idaho to Boise to find more opportunities. My husband and I fall into the coverage gap, and we are concerned about our lack of access to affordable health insurance. I have had endometriosis since I was a child and lack of health coverage has left me with no choice but to let it go untreated. Eventually, the adhesions in my body were crushing my internal organs so I had to have emergency surgery. Hospitalizations have caused me to lose my job and leave jobs because of the repercussions of letting my medical conditions go untreated.

“Being in the gap makes it harder to work. By helping us access affordable healthcare coverage, we will be more productive and be able to support our family without government assistance.”

My husband has high-blood pressure and terrible back pain from years of working at labor intensive jobs. But we can't afford the medication or treatments he needs. A few years ago, I fell down the stairs and broke a rib. While my rib was being repaired we learned that I have a heart condition as well, but to see a cardiologist would require payment for a visit in full, and we can't afford to both visit a specialist and pay for food and clothes for our kids.

My family is not looking for a government hand-out. What I most want to convey to you is that closing the coverage gap would be one of the most important things you could do to make my family, and other families like mine, healthier and more productive. Being in the gap makes it harder to work. By helping us access affordable healthcare coverage, we will be more productive and be able to support our family without government assistance. For us, this is not a political issue. We are good, Christian Republicans and we support a complete solution to Idaho's coverage gap.

Bernice & Logan's Story



Bernice and Logan live in Boise with their sons, Osiris and Gareth. Bernice has her Ph.D. and has always dreamed of teaching and working with underprivileged children. Logan is a software engineer. They love going to the park, movies, and have a yearly family tradition of going to the Western Idaho Fair at least once. Even with her educational background, Bernice has struggled to find stable employment. She works two to four part-time jobs as an adjunct professor. Logan has been unable to work due to diabetes, a lack of health coverage and the need to be home to help care for their two autistic boys.

“The large majority of people in the coverage gap are not unskilled, uneducated, and don’t work. We are educated, hardworking individuals who want to work and contribute to our community.”

For their family, stability is only achieved through access to health coverage for all of them. Medicaid has covered their boys and the valuable services they receive, but Bernice and Logan are uninsured. They make too little to qualify for a tax credit through the healthcare exchange and don’t qualify for Medicaid. Which means, they don’t receive access to health care unless it becomes an emergency. Health insurance would allow Logan to access wound care, heart and lung tests and would allow Bernice to update her six-year-old eye prescription. More importantly, it would mean that health issues could be addressed early and before they became a crisis. One medical emergency could mean not paying rent or keeping the lights on.

Having medical coverage for the whole family would create stability. “The large majority of people in the coverage gap are skilled, educated and working,” Bernice said. We could do so much more if we were able to have the peace of mind health coverage provides.”

Cheryl's Story



My name is Cheryl and I live in Boise, ID. I am a single mom to a beautiful 11-year-old girl, Violet. We enjoy singing, watching movies and spending time with extended family.

Having a high quality of life is so important because my daughter needs me to be there. Having health coverage is how I attain that. It's difficult to afford my health insurance and medication and that's terrifying. I owe the preservation of my present life to affordable health coverage. I was able to qualify for insurance despite my pre-existing conditions and my insurance went into effect within a month after I applied.

“Access to affordable health coverage...is essential for people like me. With it, I am able to get access to my medications and health care. I am able to work and enjoy life with my daughter.”

When temporary spousal support I've received ends soon, I will experience a drop in income and will be in the coverage gap. My employer does not offer health coverage. I do not make enough for a tax credit, and make too much to qualify for Medicaid. My income can barely cover my basic bills. The three prescriptions I am on help me function for my daughter emotionally and physically. I don't know what I'd do without my medications. Access to affordable health coverage laid the groundwork for many and is essential for people like me. With it, I am able to get access to my medications and health care. I am able to work and enjoy life with my daughter.

Close the Gap Idaho would like to thank each Idahoan who has shared their story. They have bravely come forward to share very personal stories to show elected officials the value of Medicaid and access to affordable health coverage in Idaho. May we all come together and remember the individual people in Idaho affected by healthcare proposals.

