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Close the Gap Idaho Opposes SB1204a, Medicaid Expansion Barriers to Coverage Bill

BOISE, ID – Close the Gap Idaho has come out in opposition to SB1204a after the Senate moved to add harmful barriers to coverage to a bill previously supported by healthcare advocates.

Harmful amendments to 1204 were made in the Senate despite hours of committee testimony in support of the original legislation from healthcare advocates and members of the public. Prior bills with similar barriers to coverage were met with opposition from more than 50 groups on two separate occasions in recent weeks.

The amendments include work-reporting requirements, a required referral to see a family planning specialist, the option for those living between 100-138% of the federal poverty level to stay on the exchange, a required legislative review of Medicaid expansion in the 2023 legislative session, and others.

“The amendments to Senate Bill 1204 direct state funds to additional bureaucracy. A better investment for Idaho families would be the types of training and education that help people climb up the economic ladder,” said Lauren Necochea, director of Idaho Voices for Children.

Instead of removing people from coverage for noncompliance, the work-reporting requirement in SB1204a would institute copays for individuals who do not meet the requirement. Using copays in this way would trigger a 1916(f) waiver, which is difficult and costly to apply for and administer. The proposed provision would result in added costs while making it difficult for some applicants to navigate the bureaucracy, submit the required paperwork, and secure coverage. No such waiver has ever been approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Just last week, a federal district court declared work requirements in Kentucky and Arkansas illegal.

“Medicaid work requirements will create an unexpected disincentive to seek employment for people with mental illness and other disabilities,” said Jim Baugh, JD, Executive Director of DisAbility Rights Idaho. “For most people, work is beneficial and rehabilitative. However, if getting even a part-time job means that you are no longer “unfit for employment” you lose your exemption and now have new, burdensome reporting requirements or copays. It is far safer for an exempt person to avoid work altogether.”

After Proposition 2 passed with more than 61% of the vote, a late-February poll found that [74% of Idahoans feel the Legislature should implement the law as it was passed by the voters](#), while only 17% say the law should be changed.

About Close the Gap Idaho: Close the Gap Idaho is a network of over 300 organizations and individuals statewide, working to support a complete solution to the coverage gap and to preserve health coverage for Idahoans. Close the Gap Idaho has led the effort to expand Medicaid in Idaho since 2014. A list of Close the Gap Idaho steering committee members can be found on the [Close the Gap Idaho website](#). Quotes from additional member organizations and Idahoans in the gap are shared below.

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