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Dozens of Health Care Organizations Oppose Idaho's 1115 Waiver Request for Medicaid Work Requirements

BOISE, ID—Following intense opposition to work reporting requirements added to Medicaid expansion, Close the Gap Idaho remains opposed to the expensive and dangerous policies outlined in Idaho's 1115 waiver application filed on Friday. The proposed policies are not likely to support work but will certainly result in considerable loss of health coverage for thousands of people—as the state itself acknowledges.

Per legislation passed during the 2019 session, the state of Idaho has prepared and submitted an application to the federal government to add work reporting requirements to Idaho's voter-approved Medicaid expansion. Despite the hundreds of Idahoans who turned out to testify against work reporting requirements and other restrictions, the final policy outlined in the application is even more harmful than the one originally described by legislators.

“The purpose of Medicaid is to help states provide health insurance to residents who need it most,” said Dr. Andrea Christopher, of Idaho Doctors and Nurses for Health Care. “Work reporting requirements are counter to that purpose, adding layers of red tape and doing nothing to promote work. In fact, the experience of other states with these kinds of policies shows that people who should qualify for coverage actually lose it as a result of not knowing they need to report. This puts up barriers to critical medication and medical care, and increases the risk of people getting sick and losing their jobs due to illness” Dr. Christopher said.

Work reporting requirements are not only costly and ineffective—they lead to dangerous coverage losses. New Hampshire delayed implementation of work reporting requirements when the state realized that 17,000 people would lose health coverage in the first month, mostly as a result of not knowing they needed to report their hours. In Arkansas, over 18,000 enrollees lost their Medicaid coverage in less than six months. The majority of those people remain uninsured today. Work reporting requirements have been deemed illegal in every state which has attempted to implement them.

The state's draft application indicates that approximately 18%, or 16,000 of the 91,000 Idahoans they expect to enroll in expanded Medicaid could lose coverage. Using the coverage loss percentage of 23% that Arkansas experienced, however, means the coverage loss would be closer to 21,000. The real number of Idahoans

who are barred from or lose coverage will likely be even higher because Idaho's policy is considerably harsher than Arkansas --with enrollees losing coverage after just one month of missing paperwork deadlines. In contrast, Arkansas had a "three strikes you're out" policy – only terminating coverage after three months of noncompliance.

"For people with disabilities, the proposed waiver will impose burdensome paperwork requirements to prove that they are disabled and exempt," said Dina Flores-Brewer, Executive Director of DisAbility Rights Idaho. "Even once exempt, the burden of periodic reporting of work hours and possible fluctuations in the number of hours worked can put their medical coverage at risk."

"Idahoans with heart disease and other chronic conditions need access to consistent care" said Erin Bennett, Idaho Government Relations Director for the American Heart Association. "Losing coverage through a work reporting requirement would be devastating and life threatening to someone who needs regular medication, visits with their specialists, and access to health care. Taking these crucial support systems away from someone would not only make it impossible for them to hold down a job, it will make it difficult for them to survive."

At a time where the state is poised to close the coverage gap through Medicaid expansion, adding work requirements to Medicaid is a step backwards. Close the Gap Idaho remains committed to opposing policies that threaten the well-being of Idahoans. In joining dozens of other organizations and hundreds of Idahoans, we plan to submit comments to CMS in opposition to Idaho's waiver and during the 30-day comment period. Public hearings on Idaho's waiver application will take place in Boise from 1-3 p.m. on September 3 and 6.

About Close the Gap Idaho: Close the Gap Idaho is a network of over 5000 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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