



PRESS RELEASE
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Cuts to Medicaid would jeopardize critical health services for Ohio students

Each year, Ohio's schools receive \$81.5 million from Medicaid to pay for health services like speech therapy, mental health services and wellness screenings for eligible students and students with disabilities, according to a report released today by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) mandates that schools provide health services necessary for students with disabilities to access a quality education. Though federal IDEA funds are supposed to cover 40 percent of these costs, they covered only 16 percent nationally in 2015. States and schools must cover the rest, and Medicaid is filling in the gap.

If Congressional Republicans cut funding to Medicaid through proposed changes like per capita caps or block grants, states and schools will have to either pick up the costs of services or make service cuts.

"Changes to Medicaid funding would threaten the access of 20 percent of students in our district to speech pathologists, social workers and nursing services," said Andrew Smith, a social worker with the Sheffield-Sheffield Lake City schools. "Medicaid has created a safety net for thousands of students who walk our halls with undiagnosed mental illness. This is so important as more students face the stresses of opioid addiction among loved ones."

Nationally, 68 percent of school superintendents reported using Medicaid funding to retain school nurses, counselors, speech therapists and other health professionals.

"Without Medicaid, Ohio schools would struggle to keep nurses and counselors on staff, provide students with disabilities the care they need to excel in school, and give children health screenings," said Amy Hanauer, Executive Director of Policy Matters Ohio. "These are the services that are at stake when policymakers threaten Medicaid."

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Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is a national partner of Policy Matters Ohio

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