



[Senate bill would shred New York's safety net](#)

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More than 6 million state residents rely on Medicaid

Medicaid is the backbone of health coverage for more than 74 million Americans. It is not a distant program that benefits any one group of people, but one that helps Americans in urban and rural areas and across all demographics—racially, economically, and generationally. Medicaid is us.

Unfortunately, the United States Senate has put millions of jobs at risk with its counterproductive gutting of Medicaid proposed under the Better Care Reconciliation Act. The bill would move America's health care system, and our entire economy, in a dangerous and harmful direction. It would phase out Medicaid coverage for millions of Americans and threaten the viability of the Medicaid system through underfunded per capita allotments.

In New York and beyond we see evidence of the benefits of Medicaid for people from all walks of life, and the economic and job security that Medicaid coverage brings. More than 6 million New Yorkers rely on Medicaid for their health care. At Amida Care, New York's largest special-needs health plan for people with chronic conditions such as HIV, over 75% of our HIV-positive members have viral loads that are undetectable, meaning that they are healthier and require significantly less costly care. This saved the state more than \$110 million between 2008 and 2015. Reducing patients' viral load also reduces the possibility of infection, and preventing just one HIV infection can save upwards of \$500,000 in lifetime medical costs.

Medicaid isn't welfare; it benefits working Americans. Almost 60% of adults with Medicaid coverage are working. Nearly half of them work for small businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Medicaid is essential for hardworking Americans to keep their jobs. Medicaid helps people manage their chronic illnesses—so they can keep working. It is critical to supporting drug rehabilitation programs to counter the opioid epidemic sweeping the nation so these people can get well and get back to work. Medicaid provides for healthy and safe births. Nearly two-thirds of older and disabled Americans, including 67% of nursing home residents in New York, rely on Medicaid to help pay for long-term care services, lifting a burden off family members—so they can continue to work.

President Donald Trump promised, “Every single American will have the opportunity to realize his or her fullest potential. The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.” Millions of these forgotten Americans are able to work only because they receive health care coverage through Medicaid.

Access to quality, affordable health care is a right, not a privilege. There are legitimate differences of opinion about health care policy in America, but name-calling, finger-pointing and partisan politics gain us nothing. Medicaid has a significant impact on job creation and economic well-being for us all. At every point in our lives, Medicaid is there to ensure that we and our loved ones have the health security we need to maintain our economic security. Medicaid belongs to everyone and benefits everyone. From birth to death, one in two Americans will need Medicaid during their lifetimes. In this debate; there is no us and them. There is only *us*.

Doug Wirth is president and CEO of Amida Care, a New York special-needs health plan with a Medicaid contract that supports 185 workers.

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