

Dear Legislation,

I am writing in regards to Bill 576 requiring the Department of Human Services to provide medical assistance to employed individuals with disabilities without regards to individuals' income or resources. I am writing to you not only as a professional Clinical Rehabilitation Counselor, but also as a wheelchair user who relies on healthcare and health insurance to not only survive, but to thrive in my employment and daily life.

Government support through SSI, SSDI and even SNAP and TANIF is meant to help individuals survive, with the intention that people will become employed and work towards independence, become tax payers, and decrease this need for Government supports. This being said, as soon as people with disabilities do get jobs and start to make an income, health coverage often disappears.

Even with the income of employment, many employment opportunities do not offer health insurance benefits and health insurance costs are still too expensive to be able to pay for with an entry level or part time income. Many times, employment for people with disabilities is part time, as we take extra time and energy throughout our day to do things that people without disabilities do not have to commit resources toward. This need to commit both time and energy to mind/body care reduces the amount of stamina and time in a day for persons with disabilities to work full time. The eight-hour work day was based on the able body's stamina, not the disabled body/mind. At this point we have a person with a disability working and getting themselves out of the scramble to just survive, to a place where they are able to thrive, then they lose their health care because their employer is not providing it and DHS says that they are making too much or have too many assets.

Health care is a necessity for people with disabilities. It can be the difference between life or death and without health care the disabled may not be able to live, let alone work. The concern and reality of losing health care benefits in the act of becoming employed and creating a safety net of assets keeps the disabled at a level of only being able to survive, relying fully on the tax payer's dollar for that survival, never able to successfully become employed, have health care, and began to thrive.

Thank you,

Aarynn Cypher, MS, Clinical Rehabilitation Counselor

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