

Tell Your Members of Congress – Don't Cut Our Lifeline!

The deficit reduction bill that President Obama signed into law in August, 2011 will have a significant effect on federal spending over the next 10 years. It will cut more than \$1 trillion dollars in discretionary spending alone.

Fortunately, work from advocates like you helped to ensure that, so far, entitlement programs like Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income were protected from the cuts in the first step of the deficit reduction law. Despite the short-term safety of these programs, we have a great deal of work ahead of us to ensure that Medicaid remains protected in the next steps.

Members of Congress are very reluctant to cut Medicare, as the elderly community is a very reliable voting constituency and they are vocal advocates. Historically, Social Security is considered the “third rail” in politics, and as such, not to be touched. That leaves Medicaid on the table as a prime target for cuts, which is why your support is so important.

How can we make Congress understand why Medicaid is so important?

We have to *personalize* the importance of protecting Medicaid for people with I/DD. Advocates need to do the following:

1) Call your Senators or Member of the House of Representatives

Call the Capitol Switchboard to reach your Members of Congress: 202-224-3121. Also, be sure to [sign up](#) for our Action Alerts, and act quickly when we send them!

2) Make an Appointment with your Elected Officials

Call your elected officials for an appointment to discuss what Medicaid means to you. Find out when your Member of the House of Representatives will be home from Washington, and [call his or her district office](#) to make an appointment. Stress with the scheduler that you know that budget cuts could come up for a vote this summer, and you want your voice to be heard!

3) Attend a Town Hall Meeting

When Members of Congress are back in their districts, they often hold town hall meetings. [Call their district offices](#) to find out when the next meeting is so that you can attend and share your story directly with your Representative.

4) Invite your Senators and Representative to your local chapter of The Arc.

Invite them to join you at places or events where they will be able to meet with people with disabilities who depend heavily on Medicaid. For example, invite them to a supported housing setting or apartment supported by your chapter(s). Seeing firsthand the people who depend on Medicaid-funded long-term services and supports can have a powerful effect on Members of Congress and can help to dispel many of the unfortunate misperceptions about the program (for example, that it serves people who don't really need it). If possible, invite them to a chapter

event that's happening during the recess where they may meet and talk with people who depend on Medicaid for services.

5) Write a Letter to the Editor

Local newspapers will print letters from local residents on timely topics. Sharing your personal story about how Medicaid is your lifeline to health care and long term services and supports will help people understand why we must maintain the program.

6) Use Social Media to Spread the Word

Facebook and Twitter are often the first source of news for your friends and family. Use your online network to ask them to get involved in this fight!