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Letter to the editor: Take scalpel, not chainsaw, to Medicaid

COMMENTARY

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OPINION:

Americans in underserved communities will be hurt if Congress makes deep Medicaid cuts. Underserved communities already face healthcare disparities; Medicaid helps bridge this gap.

Reducing Medicare funding would devastate hundreds of thousands of families and result in long-term costs our health-care system cannot afford. Medicaid is one of the only sources of health care for families who battle chronic conditions requiring ongoing medical care, such as muscular dystrophy. Proposed Medicaid cuts would mean delayed treatments, worsening health outcomes and increased hospitalizations.

Restrictions on access cause individuals to turn to emergency rooms as a last resort, leading to higher uncompensated care costs for both hospitals and taxpayers.

Medicaid is also an investment in long-term savings for the health-care system. Preventive care and early intervention services funded by Medicaid help manage chronic conditions. Regular screenings, check-ups and management programs for patients with diabetes and heart disease, for example, help avoid complications that require more expensive treatments.

There is certainly plenty of room for reform and ample ways to improve access to services for Medicaid beneficiaries and patients across the health-care system. But rushing through indiscriminate cuts without proper debate is not a good solution — especially when the result will be pushing more Americans into financial hardship and increased costs down the road.

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