

Health Law and Policy Update:

March 15, 2013

This week's updates:

- [Colorado one-step closer to extending Medicaid coverage to thousands who need it](#)
- [Public and private insurance advocates should pay careful attention to the design of Colorado's Single Streamlined Application](#)
- [House Budget proposes repealing health reform law, cutting access to affordable health care](#)

What's New

Colorado one-step closer to extending Medicaid coverage to thousands who need it

We are pleased to report that the Senate Health and Human Services committee approved SB13-200 (Sen.Aguilar/Rep. Farrandino) yesterday, which increases Medicaid eligibility to 133% of FPL. The bill passed on a 5-2 vote. In favor were: Senators Aguilar, Crowder, Kefalas, Newall, and Nicholson. Opposed: Senators Lundberg and Roberts.

The three and a half hours of testimony in favor of SB200 demonstrate Colorado's vast support for Medicaid. Seniors, teachers, consumers, health care providers, advocates, business groups, and hospital administrators all spoke out in favor of the bill. There was no testimony in opposition. Elisabeth Arenales, the director of CCLP's health program, was among those in support, stating the bill "will help create economic opportunity for low-income Coloradans by providing economic security where there has previously been fear and uncertainty about health care costs." See her full testimony [here](#).

We are proud of our Colorado legislators for advancing a bill that will improve health access for many low-income Coloradans and strengthen our state economy. SB13-200 will move on to appropriations before being heard on the Senate floor next week. Show your support and join us at the Capitol or online using twitter or facebook.

For more on the hearing see articles from the [Denver Business Journal](#), [Colorado Public Radio](#), [Health Policy Solutions](#), and the [Denver Post](#).

Advancing the Debate

Public and private insurance advocates should pay careful attention to the design of Colorado's Single Streamlined Application

The Washington Post carried an Associated Press [story](#) this week that raised questions about the length and complexity of the draft Single Streamlined Application (SSA) for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The application, still under development, will be used in states that have federally facilitated exchanges. While the ACA requires each state to have an exchange, states had the option to establish their own or defer that responsibility to the federal government. Colorado authorized its own exchange in 2011, through SB11-200. We have reported regularly on the development of the Colorado Health Benefit Exchange (COHBE), which will begin accepting applications for coverage in October. COHBE will begin seeking public comments on its application for coverage on March 26th at a [meeting](#) of the Individual Experience Advisory Group.

Public and private insurance advocates should pay close attention to the design of Colorado's Single Streamlined Application. The purpose of the application is to screen people for eligibility for all insurance affordability programs, including Medicaid, CHP+ and Exchange products. Anyone applying for health insurance through COHBE will be screened for eligibility for Medicaid/CHP+. Applicants not eligible for those programs will be screened for eligibility for federal subsidies for the purchase of insurance through the Exchange.

Many of the application requirements are set by the federal government, but Colorado can choose its own design features and incorporate additional elements. So far, it looks like Colorado is likely to model its application on the one being developed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). CCLP

raised concerns about application design, complexity and accessibility of the draft federal application in [comments](#). We also joined one of our national colleagues, the Georgetown Center for Children and Families, in their [comments](#). Among the concerns we raised were disability and language access, user friendliness and basic design features. As an example the colors used on the paper application make it impossible for eligibility workers to scan the document. While much work has gone into the draft application, we hope the final version is more accessible.

While we hope that Colorado can develop an application that is well tested, well designed and easily accessible, it is clear that a large number of people are likely to need help with the application process. COHBE has begun to build a robust Navigator Program and the complexity of the application highlights how important it is to have adequate numbers of well trained navigators. COHBE is in the process of accepting proposals from those entities that are interested in being Navigators. [Applications](#) are due on April 8th. In addition, we hope that Colorado recognizes the need to test the application with potential exchange applicants and professional assisters, including county eligibility workers. Finally, we hope that we can build in opportunities for application redesign down the road, as COHBE and the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing learn about any glitches or design features that may present barriers to completion.

For more about the federal SSA see [The Commonwealth Fund](#).

What you can do:

Attend the Individual Experience Advisory Committee

March 26, 2013 at 10:30 AM

3773 Cherry Creek N. Drive

Second Floor Training Room, Suite 290

Denver, CO 80209

Fiscal Notes

House Budget proposes repealing health reform law, cutting access to affordable health care

In his [budget](#) released on Tuesday, House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) once again proposed repealing the Affordable Care Act and making drastic cuts to Medicaid. As he has for the past three years, Chairman Ryan proposes to repeal health reform's expansions of access to affordable health care, including the law's Medicaid expansion. This important provision is the basis for Colorado's proposed Medicaid expansion to all people making less than 133 percent of the federal poverty level (\$15,282 for an individual). Additionally, Chairman Ryan's budget would turn Medicaid into a "block grant," capping the amount of money each state receives from the federal government to provide health care under Medicaid.

Chairman Ryan's proposal is similar to his proposal the past two years and, if enacted, would have devastating effects on health care for low income folks in Colorado. Nationally, Chairman Ryan's budget would [slash Medicaid funding](#) by nearly a third by 2023. Last year, the Urban Institute and the Kaiser Family Foundation [estimated](#) that, under Chairman Ryan's Budget, Colorado would lose \$19.5 billion in federal Medicaid funding and 447,000 low income Coloradans and their children would be cut from the Medicaid rolls. Nationally, at least 31.3 million people would lose access to essential health care through Medicaid.

Last year, the House of Representatives passed Chairman Ryan's budget and the House is expected to vote on and pass the budget in the coming weeks. Last year, all of Colorado's Republican representatives voted for the budget while all of Colorado's Democrat representatives voted against it. The Senate is not expected to consider the House-passed budget and the Senate is currently considering its own budget proposal, authored by Chairman Patty Murray (D-WA).