



## MEDICAID WORKS:

### *Protecting the Health of Colorado Women*

Health First Colorado, Colorado's Medicaid program, is a public health insurance program that pays for necessary health care services for low-income Coloradans and those living with disabilities. By investing in health care services and supports, Health First Colorado improves health outcomes, reduces unnecessary costs to the health system, and supports a strong Colorado economy. Health First Colorado is also an efficient program; spending far less than what private insurers pay for enrollees of similar health status.<sup>i</sup>

Despite Health First Colorado's successes and efficient use of funds, opponents of Medicaid have proposed drastic cuts to federal funding for the program. Federal Medicaid funding currently comprises 60 percent of Health First Colorado's budget.<sup>ii</sup> Funding reductions will force Colorado lawmakers to make hard decisions about where to cut eligibility, services, provider rates or a combination of the three.

To build the case for Medicaid, Colorado Center on Law and Policy has compiled **Medicaid Works**, a series of fact sheets that outline some of the reasons Health First Colorado is so important in our state.

This fact sheet explains why Health First Colorado is so critical to Colorado women and examines how they would be harmed if federal lawmakers drastically cut Medicaid by converting the program's funding into a block grant or per-capita cap.

#### ***Why Health First Colorado is important for the health of Colorado women:***

- **Health First Colorado covers health care services for women living at or near poverty.** Health First Colorado is a vital source of health coverage for Colorado women because they face economic disparities. Single women with children account for the greatest share of families living in poverty. Although only 9.9 percent of Coloradans live in single mother households, they account for 44 percent of households in poverty.<sup>iii</sup> In addition, women working full-time earn only 82 percent of what Colorado men earn.<sup>iv</sup> Health First Colorado covers women in households with incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level (about \$33,465 a year for a family of 4 in 2016).
- **Health First Colorado provides health care services for low income pregnant women.** Prenatal care is critical to the health of both the child and the mother. Health First Colorado covers pregnant women in households with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level (about \$48,500 a year for a family of 4 in 2016). Health First Colorado covers prenatal care, labor

and delivery and post-partum care for enrolled pregnant women and pays for 43 percent of all births in the state.<sup>v</sup>

- **Health First Colorado covers cancer screenings and treatments for enrolled Colorado women.** Cancer screenings save lives. Nationwide, the increase in screenings for breast cancer have helped reduce breast cancer mortality by 40 percent since 1990.<sup>vi</sup> In state fiscal year 15-16, Health First Colorado paid for 20,559 breast cancer screenings and 12,423 cancer treatments, including treatments for breast and cervical cancer.<sup>vii</sup>
- **Health First Colorado provides critical coverage for women needing family planning services and supplies.** Colorado's women and families fare better when women have access to family planning services and supplies (FPSS), including the birth-control methods that work best for them. Health First Colorado covers FPSS without cost sharing for individuals and gives women the freedom of choice to visit any Health First Colorado provider to obtain FPSS. Expanded access to long-acting reversible contraceptives, including IUDs and implants, has been shown to reduce unwanted pregnancies and abortions among low-income women. In Colorado, a six-year program that provided women with free IUDs or hormonal implants resulted in a 40 percent decline in birthrates among teen moms and a 42 percent decline in teen abortions from 2009 to 2013.<sup>viii</sup>
- **Health First Colorado improves access to health care for Colorado women working in low-wage jobs.** Seventy-five percent of non-disabled adults enrolled in Health First Colorado work in low-wage jobs.<sup>ix</sup> Health First Colorado is a vital source of health coverage for Colorado women that serve our food, stock our grocery stores, clean our homes, offices and hotel rooms, and care for our children. The health of low-wage workers is critical to our economy and to the health and wellbeing of individual Coloradans.

### ***How funding caps would harm the health of Colorado women:***

Currently, federal law requires the federal government to cover at least half of the cost of providing services for those enrolled in Health First Colorado. For individuals covered as a result of the ACA's Medicaid expansion, over 90 percent of costs are covered by the federal government. Capping federal funding for Health First Colorado by converting the funding into a block grant or a per capita cap would eliminate those guarantees and would drastically reduce federal support for the program over the next several years. Existing proposals to cap Medicaid funding are expected to reduce the federal government's contribution to state Medicaid programs by over \$1 trillion nationwide over the next 10 years -- and that is without taking into consideration proposals to cut or eliminate the ACA's Medicaid expansion which brought nearly \$1.1 billion federal dollars into the state during the first full fiscal year of the expansion.<sup>x</sup>

Federal funds currently make up 60 percent of Health First Colorado's budget. Drastic cuts in that funding will shift the cost of providing care to Colorado and require Colorado lawmakers to substantially increase the General Fund contribution to Health First Colorado or cut eligibility, services, provider rates or a combination of the three.

If faced with these cuts, Colorado lawmakers will need to make hard choices regarding a program that pays for critical health care services for children living in poverty, low-wage workers, older Coloradans

and Coloradans living with disabilities. Health First Colorado also provides a critical funding stream for hospitals and other providers that serve low-income Coloradans and other underserved communities.

Reduced funding for women enrolled in Health First Colorado will mean less access to critical pregnancy, family planning and cancer care for women living in or near poverty.

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<sup>i</sup> Lisa Clemans-Cope, John Holahan and Rachel Garfield, *Medicaid Spending Growth Compared to Other Payers: A Look at the Evidence*, (Washington, DC: The Kaiser Family Foundation, April 2016) <http://kff.org/report-section/medicaid-spending-growth-compared-to-other-payers-issue-brief/>.

<sup>ii</sup> Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, *Joint Budget Committee Hearing: Executive Director's Office*, Slide Presentation (December 14, 2016), <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/HCPF%20EDO%20JBC%20Hearing%20Presentation%2012.14.16.pdf>.

<sup>iii</sup> Michelle Webster and Jesus Loyaza. *State of Work in Colorado*, (Denver, CO: Colorado Center on Law & Policy, 2016), [http://cclponline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2016\\_SOWC\\_Final.pdf](http://cclponline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2016_SOWC_Final.pdf).

<sup>iv</sup> Id.

<sup>v</sup> *Births Financed By Medicaid*, (Washington, DC: The Kaiser Family Foundation, 2016) <http://kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/births-financed-by-medicaid/?currentTimeframe=0>.

<sup>vi</sup> *Mamography Facts*, Webpage, <http://www.mammographysaveslives.org/Facts>

<sup>vii</sup> Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, *Joint Budget Committee Hearing: Executive Director's Office*, Slide Presentation (December 14, 2016), <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/HCPF%20EDO%20JBC%20Hearing%20Presentation%2012.14.16.pdf>.

<sup>viii</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, *Colorado's Effort Against Teenage Pregnancies Is a Startling Success*, (New York Times, July 5, 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/06/science/colorados-push-against-teenage-pregnancies-is-a-startling-success.html>.

<sup>ix</sup> Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, *Joint Budget Committee Hearing: Executive Director's Office*, Slide Presentation (December 14, 2016), <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/HCPF%20EDO%20JBC%20Hearing%20Presentation%2012.14.16.pdf>.

<sup>x</sup> Edwin Park. *Medicaid Block Grant Would Slash Federal Funding, Shift Costs to States, and Leave Millions More Uninsured*, (Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, November, 2016), [http://www.cbpp.org/research/health/medicaid-block-grant-would-slash-federal-funding-shift-costs-to-states-and-leave#\\_ftn5](http://www.cbpp.org/research/health/medicaid-block-grant-would-slash-federal-funding-shift-costs-to-states-and-leave#_ftn5).