



Congresswoman McCollum,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Alicia Munson, Public Policy Director for The Arc Minnesota – a statewide nonprofit organization that works to promote and protect the human rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, actively supporting them and their families in a lifetime of full inclusion and participation in their communities.

For many years, a consistent priority in our work, fundamental to our mission, has been protecting and supporting access to Medicaid – a critical lifeline for the 1 in 2 Minnesotans with disabilities who access the program¹, more than 200,000 of whom depend on Medicaid for health insurance².

For many Minnesotans, Medicaid is also a foundation for lives of inclusion. More than 47,000 Minnesotans with disabilities access Home and Community Based Service waivers³ that help them live and work as independently as possible in settings of their choice. For some, Medicaid literally means the difference between life and death; between inclusion and institutionalization.

One such individual is David, a 31-year old man who lives in St. Paul and has Down Syndrome. In his young adulthood, Medicaid was a critical lifeline for David when he developed complex health concerns which took him in and out of the hospital, requiring multiple surgeries and various therapies. But with the unwavering support of his family, and thanks to Medicaid, David is now thriving; his mother Jean says that “David has a life Minnesotans would want for any young adult: a home of his own and days filled with activities of his choosing in his community”.

Stories like David’s are why we at The Arc, alongside people with disabilities and their families, spent much of 2017 fighting vigilantly against threats to Medicaid – which have again been laid out in President Trump’s recent budget in the form of per capita caps and block grants.

These proposed cuts to Medicaid are unprecedented and would have a devastating impact; as would administrative actions which deny access to the Medicaid services and supports that Minnesotans rely on – including the reversal of long standing CMS policy, approving state waiver amendments which implement work requirements for those accessing Medicaid. We are deeply concerned that fundamental programs we have long supported, such as Medicaid buy-in programs, habilitative services, and community-based employment supports, are now being used to justify policies that would allow states to create barriers to Medicaid eligibility.

It is our firm position that cutting off Medicaid won’t help anyone to work – just the opposite. Medicaid specifically covers services that are critical to supporting Minnesotans with disabilities to have basic needs met, to get to and from work, and to be part of the workforce. Requiring individuals to work to qualify for these programs would create a situation in which they cannot access the services they need *in order to work*– setting up an impossible standard.

Also at risk are many other programs that make community living possible for people with disabilities, including Social Security.

As you know, Social Security’s disability programs and Supplemental Security Income “provide a basic standard of living for extremely low income adults with significant disabilities. President Trump has promised repeatedly that he would not cut Social Security”; however, his “proposed 2019 budget does just that, slashing over \$83 billion from Social Security and SSI over 10 years, including at least \$70 billion” over the course of that time “in cuts to the Social Security Administration’s disability programs⁴”. These drastic cuts to SSI would directly impact nearly 83,000 Minnesotans⁵, who would face a very different reality if implemented as proposed by President Trump and some within Congress.

We at The Arc, alongside people with disabilities and their families, remain vehemently opposed to proposals that attack and alter the lifelines that are so crucial in supporting people to live, work, and thrive as fully included members of their communities.

We will lend our full support to efforts which protect Medicaid and Social Security, and are a ready and willing to act as a resource – sharing data, information, and personal stories from people such as David.

Many thanks for your time today, Congresswoman McCollum, and for all of your hard work on behalf of constituents with disabilities in Minnesota’s fourth Congressional district.

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¹<http://files.kff.org/attachment/fact-sheet-medicaid-state-mn>

²<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/news/2017/03/22/428185/impact-medicaid-cuts-people-disabilities-state-state-breakdown/>

³<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/disbprog.pdf>

⁴<http://www.c-c-d.org/fichiers/CCD-SSTF-Trump-Budget-FactSheet.pdf>

⁵https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/ssi_sc/2016/mn.html