



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Sharon Kayne
Communications Director, New Mexico Voices for Children
505-244-9505 ext. 30 (p), 505-401-8709 (c), skayne@nmvoices.org

Millions of Eligible Americans May Lose Medicaid Benefits

ALBUQUERQUE—People applying for Medicaid will have to show a birth certificate or passport as proof of citizenship beginning July 1. That's because of an amendment to the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 that was intended to deny Medicaid assistance to undocumented immigrants. But the measure will have unintended consequences for many U.S. citizens who are eligible for the health care program.

"The people most harmed by this will be Native Americans who were born at home and don't have a hospital birth certificate. Their proof of tribal affiliation won't be accepted as proof of citizenship," said Sharon Kayne, Communications Director for New Mexico Voices for Children. "It also puts a road block up for anyone who has lost their original birth certificate. When you have limited resources just to apply for these kinds of programs is hard enough. The more requirements the government puts in place, the more people will be left behind."

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that some 1.7 million adults and 2.9 million children who are eligible for Medicaid do not have ready access to their birth certificates. Few people who qualify for Medicaid are likely to have the money to apply for a passport, which is an expensive and lengthy process.

"In New Mexico, we've worked so hard to get families enrolled who are eligible. This will set our progress back," said Kayne.

New Mexico Senator Jeff Bingaman has introduced a bill to repeal the amendment – S 2305 – but it hasn't seen much movement since being introduced this spring.

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New Mexico Voices for Children is a progressive nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.
2340 Alamo SE, Suite 120, Albuquerque, NM 97106; 505-244-9505 (p), 505-244-9509 (f)
www.nmvoices.org