

The New Mexico Medicaid Coalition

Press Release

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New National Poll Shows 74% Say Medicaid Very Important,

Mirrors New Mexico Opinion;

Support for Medicaid Rivals Social Security

Albuquerque – A new national poll, conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, shows public support for Medicaid is remarkably strong. A substantial majority (74%) of Americans say Medicaid is a “very important” government program, ranking it close to Social Security (88%) and Medicare (83%) in the public’s mind.

New Mexicans Strongly Support Medicaid, Oppose Budget Cuts

Although almost 2/3 of the public thinks their state’s budget has major problems, a substantial majority (three-quarters) oppose Medicaid budget cuts in order to balance state budgets, according to the Kaiser poll.

“These finding do not surprise us”, commented Leonel Garza, Chair of State Affairs of AARP. “They are consistent with findings from a survey we did of almost 1,000 of our members in New Mexico: 81% oppose cuts in health and long-term care services as ways to balance the state budget”. The AARP is a member of the New Mexico Medicaid Coalition, a network of organizations and individuals working to preserve Medicaid and promote access to health care for New Mexicans.

Another poll of New Mexicans, conducted by New Mexico Voices for Children (a child advocacy organization that is also a member of the Coalition) also showed broad, bi-partisan support for adequate funding of Medicaid.

According to both polls, New Mexicans support funding for Medicaid over tax cuts.

New Mexico’s Medicaid Program has not been fully funded in recent years. As a consequence, thousands of New Mexicans have lost health coverage and health services, including children, seniors and disabled people.

(more)

Broad Support Linked To Personal Connection With Medicaid Program

The majority of Americans (56%) either has relied on Medicaid themselves, or knows someone who has – such as a friend, neighbor or relative. Leonel Garza adds: “Seniors who need long-term care at home or in a nursing home rely on Medicaid – those are often the parents of middle-class families who can’t afford the high cost of a nursing home. The children at your child’s school, whose parents work at **or near** the minimum wage, rely on Medicaid for health care. People with disabilities rely on Medicaid services that allow them to live independently, and that support them to return to work. This is a big tent program, like Social Security, that protects us all”.

Majority See Need for Increased Federal Funding

Half (50%) of the public feels that the federal government should put more money into the Medicaid program.

Support for Medicaid crosses party lines. 76% of Republicans favored either increasing or maintaining the level of federal spending on Medicaid, as did 85% of Democrats, according to the Kaiser poll.

Need to Contain Cost of Prescription Drugs, Other Health Care Costs, Not Medicaid

“Politicians are aiming at the wrong target when they cut away at Medicaid”, said Bill Jordan of New Mexico Voices for Children. “The problem is that health care costs in the U.S. are spiraling sky-high. We can, and should, address the problem of the health care costs by, for example, bringing prescription drug costs down to reasonable levels, as other countries have done. That would make a lot more sense than throwing our most vulnerable citizens off Medicaid to save money”.

“The state has a budget surplus and thousands of eligible children are losing their health care coverage,” Jordan said. “That’s just not right. And according to the polling data, a huge majority of New Mexicans agree”.

The Kaiser Family Foundation is a non-profit, private foundation dedicated to providing information and analysis on health care issues to policymakers, the media, the health care community and the general public. Their poll titled “The Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of the Public’s Views about Medicaid” was released June 29, 2005. A summary and related materials can be found at <http://www.kff.org/medicaid/pomr062905pkg.cfm>.

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