

## Model Op-Ed Version 1

Republicans in Congress have lambasted the Affordable Care Act recently, calling it a failed program in an effort to push dangerous reforms. The facts, however, are not on their side.

While there are fewer people currently enrolled in the individual marketplace, there are more than ever enrolled in Medicaid, thanks to the ACA expansion. Republicans' proposed reforms would erase that expansion and radically alter the structure of Medicaid, threatening access to health care for millions of Americans, including those with mental illness.

The proposed caps on Medicaid funding would give each state funding based on its population, not on its residents' actual health care needs. Proponents argue caps give states more flexibility, which is partially true.

Less federal funding won't give [State] flexibility to create innovative programs. [State] will, however, have flexibility to determine how much coverage insurance plans are required to provide and to whom, putting coverage of essential health benefits at risk, along with optional Medicaid services, like home- and community-based services (HCBS).

In most of the country, Medicaid is the only provider of HCBS, which is a cost-effective way to provide people with mental illness the support they need to live in their own homes. Restricting funding places HCBS on the chopping block to preserve funding for required services. For many, that means returning to institutionalized care, which is more restrictive and more expensive.

We've already experimented with institutionalization. It failed. If Senator [Last Name] truly cares about [his/her] constituents, [he/she] should not support a bill that repeats failed mistakes and guts mental health care.