



## Medicaid

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### Medicaid Protects Patients

The American Heart Association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to building healthier lives free from heart disease and stroke – two leading causes of death in the United States. Protecting access to affordable, high quality health care coverage is critical to our mission.

Medicaid is a vital lifeline for millions of Americans struggling with cardiovascular disease (CVD) and stroke. The House-passed American Health Care Act (AHCA) falls far short of protecting the people who need it most, especially low-income individuals, pregnant women, children, and the elderly. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that cuts to Medicaid and cost shifting under the AHCA would push 14 million current enrollees out of the Medicaid program. **The Senate must continue to protect the program by maintaining Medicaid funding and expansion.**

Today, 28 percent of adult Medicaid beneficiaries have a history of CVD and nationally, 14.6 million adults at risk for CVD are uninsured and live in states that have not yet expanded Medicaid. If all 50 states were to expand their Medicaid programs, there would be a reduction of 485,000 cases of coronary heart disease, 266,000 cases of stroke, and 513,000 CVD-related deaths by 2050.

#### Yolanda Dickerson's Story

Yolanda Dickerson was born on July 29, 1973 in Alexandria, Virginia. When she was just two years old, doctors found a ventricular septal defect (VSD), a hole in the wall separating the two sides of her heart. Doctors told her parents that because of this condition, she would not live beyond her teens.

However, because Yolanda's family had access to health care through Medicaid, she was able to undergo open heart surgery to repair the hole, saving her life. Without Medicaid coverage, Yolanda's family would never have been able to access the specialty care she needed to live a full and healthy life. Yolanda went on to earn an English degree at East Carolina University and graduated in 1997.

Later, when Yolanda became pregnant with her daughter she was told by her physician that she could not work while expecting a child because of her heart condition. During that time, she relied on Medicaid as a bridge to receive the specialty care she needed every week throughout her pregnancy until she could resume working. Since then, Yolanda has worked full-time for more than 15 years and earned her Master's degree. Both she and her 16-year-old daughter live in North Carolina where they are active AHA advocates.

Today, millions of CVD patients' access to Medicaid is in jeopardy, along with their ability to receive the care they need to achieve their academic, career and family goals.

**The Medicaid program has been serving millions of low-income individuals, pregnant women, children and the elderly for decades. We cannot afford to forsake our country's most vulnerable populations.** As the Senate pursues health care reform, we stress the importance of maintaining and strengthening the Medicaid program.