

Public Comment to the HHS Bipartisan Commission on Medicaid Reform
Jay Grimes
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Thank you for the opportunity to address the commission about Medicaid.
For a population not always able to speak for themselves.

My son, Quinn is a young boy of 10, active in school, swimming, baseball and church. He has Down Syndrome and mental retardation and poor muscle tone makes learning and participation difficult but not impossible. Through supportive services in Early Intervention and therapies along with his education in his school district, Quinn has a great future to live and participate in his community in Souderton, Pennsylvania.

The effectiveness of Early Intervention services has made a measurable effect on his life and the life of his friends who have disabilities. Starting at the age of 3 months, EI prepared him for a lifetime of learning, PT and OT helped his muscles gain strength, speech has helped him to learn to eat and communicate.

His mother and I concentrate on speech because it is the one area that Quinn has the most difficulty.

When you have a child that can not speak well or at all you understand how important speech is in our everyday life. It is important to let someone know you are happy, or what you are doing, or if you are in pain. And why.

Most importantly, speech gives you the ability to tell your story. It would be better to have Quinn here telling his story but he can't speak to it. He needs the understanding and support of family and a community of people that understand the impact of reducing support of service dollars for the opportunity to learn to help him live his dreams. In the end his education and these services will make Quinn a self sufficient working person, who in turn we fully expect will be a taxpayer.

Quinn has hearing aids that Medical Access (PA Medicaid) helped in the purchase of. Medical Access also supported the use of an FM system for those aids that helps Quinn focus on the instruction at hand and not distracted from other noises interruptions. Medicaid supports the use of a Dynamo, a small portable communicator, that expands Quinn's ability to communicate about the world around him and models his speech. For words that he can not find to form.

Quinn's medical needs are covered largely by our private insurance. But as Quinn leaves school at the age of 21, Medicaid serves as a safety net for his medical care. It provides him access to medical care if he can not live independently and work.

As a volunteer, a parent and a father, budget cuts to Medicaid severely impact Quinn's support for a life better than the millions of people with disability who came before him that did not have these supports. Cuts jeopardize the positive effect of IDEA, ADA, and medical support for a population that are not always able to speak for themselves.

We are grateful for the services provided for our children, who are examples of the successful programs funded by Medicaid.

Thank you for your commitment.