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Presentation to the Medicaid Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. It is extremely gratifying and a great honor to be a small part of a big solution to make Medicaid powerfully address the health care needs of our needy, disabled, and elderly American citizens.

I am here on behalf of my 16-year-old son Russell and thousands of other kids like him who have physical and mental disabilities. My son has severe cerebral palsy and his mobility is limited to his left hand which he uses to the max when driving his power wheelchair. Russ voices his opinions but has difficulty getting his words out, he can't stand or sit up, and he needs helps with bathing, eating and dressing.

But despite all those impediments that many see as insurmountable or to be pitied, I have incredible gratitude for Russ' accomplishments and great hope for his future.

Why? Because through God's grace, our community and church, the dedicated teachers, aids and therapists in the school district, and programs funded through Medicaid, I have a vision of Russ's future that is bright and hopeful.

Once a week in school, Russ gets speech therapy, physical therapy and occupational therapy which ^{is} funded by Medicaid. These are the only "therapies he receives because my private insurance does not cover ongoing

therapy. In addition we use Medicaid benefits to pay deductibles on Russ' medications which my private insurer doesn't cover.

So for a relatively small investment in Medicaid dollars, the return has been mighty. The additional therapies that he receives through Medicaid and the socialization that school has provided, has helped Russ land his first job.

~~Through our church,~~ Russ is visiting elderly members in nursing homes. I can truly say that he has been able to bring love, conversation, and a feeling of connectedness to those people he visits week in and week out.

I see a bright future for my son. With the assistance of Medicaid, I see Russell living independently in a supported environment, working in a job with the help of a job coach and reliable public transportation, and paying taxes just like every other American. I see him voting in elections, being part of a family, and living the dream that the Land of Opportunity promises to us all.

Of course, everything that Russ is and can become will not rely solely on Medicaid support, but Medicaid is without a doubt an important determinate of his future. And it is the cornerstone to a total approach to addressing the needs of the neediest among us. To help disabled American citizens become productive members of their communities and to the society at large.

Thank you again for your attention and your compassion.