

Overdose Prevention Initiative

Statement from Libby Jones, Associate Vice President, Global Health Advocacy Incubator, Overdose Prevention Initiative on Medicaid Oversight and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Access

Every day, millions of Americans rely on Medicaid to access the addiction treatment and mental health services that keep them alive, stable and connected to their communities. As policymakers review Medicaid spending, it is important to remember who this program serves and what is at stake for communities across the country.

Medicaid is the [largest payer](#) of behavioral health services in the United States, financing roughly one quarter of all mental health and substance use disorder treatment nationwide. It covers a significant share of the estimated 48 million Americans living with substance use disorder, people with families, jobs and futures worth fighting for.

This coverage has helped support one of the most encouraging public health developments in recent years. In 2024, the United States saw overdose deaths fall by [nearly 27 percent](#) - the largest single-year decline in decades. That progress reflects years of investment in treatment, recovery supports and community-based services that help people access care and stay connected to it.

The scale of need remains significant. In 2023, more than 84 million adults and 5.6 million youth experienced a mental health or substance use disorder. Among [Medicaid enrollees](#), nearly half of adults and almost one quarter of youth are living with these conditions. For many families, Medicaid is the only pathway to treatment.

Similar to Medicaid cuts caused by H.R. 1, recent efforts to freeze funds for Medicaid-supported services will restrict people from the care they need to stay alive. Many of the services now receiving scrutiny are not wasteful - they are the practical supports that allow people to enter recovery and protect from relapse.

The consequences of withholding funding would not be limited to Medicaid enrollees. When people cannot access treatment and community-based services, they turn to emergency rooms, and those costs are passed on to every patient and insurer. Uncompensated care drives the price of health services for everyone. A threat to these services is a threat to the whole community.

The progress the country has made in reducing overdose deaths shows that treatment works when it is accessible and consistent. Congress has a responsibility to protect the people who depend on these services that help Americans recover from addiction.