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Health Advocacy and Disability Groups Urge Governor and Legislative Leaders to Call Special Session to Address Federal Cuts to Medicaid/ACA Subsidies and Dysfunctional DSS Call Center in Time to Meet Increasing Processing Burdens

24 Groups Call on Legislature to Act Now to Address Extreme Delays in Reaching the Essential Call Center for Medicaid and SNAP, Resulting in Over Half of Callers Giving Up. In light of Lengthy Lead Time to Hire and Train New Call Center Workers, They Urge the Legislature to Now Require Hiring and Training to be Completed Prior to New Required Reporting Going into Effect

Disability Rights Connecticut (DRCT) and Connecticut Legal Services (CLS), along with 22 other health and disability advocacy organizations, are calling on Governor Ned Lamont, House Speaker Matthew Ritter and Senate President Martin Looney to call a special session of the legislature to address the severe cuts to Medicaid and subsidies on the health care exchange under the Reconciliation Bill, HR 1, passed by Congress in July.

In a letter sent today to the Governor and legislative leaders, they explain that while many of the cuts do not go into effect until the fall of 2026 or January of 2027, some of the cuts are effective much sooner, including just a few months from now in January 2026.

The organizations also emphasize in their letter the impending increased burdens of new federal Medicaid enrollee reporting requirements for the very large HUSKY D population of about 340,000 people - these individuals will be subject not only to **twice yearly** redeterminations (currently this need only be done once per year) but also to burdensome new work or work exemption reporting requirements: individuals will need to regularly demonstrate either that they are working or volunteering 80 hours per month or that they are *exempt* from these requirements because of a medical condition, being a caregiver for a family member or otherwise.

While these new burdensome reporting requirements do not go into effect until January 2027, the organizations explain in their letter that these new requirements to stay enrolled will place an enormous new burden on the call center run by Connecticut's Department of Social Services (DSS), which is *already* stretched beyond the breaking point. They refer to the performance of the call center as already being at an "atrocious" level: "[F]or July, the last month for which there is data on the DSS website dashboard, the average wait time for tier one calls was at **51 minutes** and the call abandonment rate for tier one was a shocking **53%**, i.e., well over half of callers just give up, do not speak to a human, and do not have their needs met. See [july monthly-dashboard v1.pdf](#)"

The letter explains further that, per DSS, "it will take **at least 9 months and possibly a year to both hire the necessary new staff and adequately train them to be able to fully assist Medicaid enrollees** with all aspects of Medicaid and SNAP eligibility maintenance," and therefore, if the agency is not required now to start the major hiring process, it will be impossible to address the deficiencies of the broken system in time to handle the onslaught of new calls from frightened Medicaid enrollees losing benefits starting in January, 2027.

The organizations ask specifically for two actions to be taken during a special legislative session:

(1) that a group of very low income (under 100% of FPL) legal immigrants scheduled to lose all of their subsidies on the exchange on 12/31/25, and thus lose all health insurance coverage, be protected, and

(2) that DSS be subject to the same standard for timeliness of its call center that it imposes on its *own* contractors, noting that its large administrative services organization contractor under Medicaid, CHNCT, is required to “**answer 90% of calls with a live person within sixty (60) seconds.**”

“The current wait times to reach a person who can assist you at DSS call center are terrible, and the main reason is because it lacks the staff to meet the need that exists. People are waiting an hour or even two hours to get through and many give up. This is a crisis now and will only worsen when the changes from HR1 roll out, such as work requirements. Work requirements will double the number of redeterminations each year for our fellow residents enrolled in Husky D,” commented Kristen Noelle Miller Hatcher, the Managing Attorney for the Benefits Unit of CLS.

“What adds to our frustration when we think about the new burden we all will undertake,” she continued, “is that we know that where work requirements have been implemented previously (Arkansas and Georgia), they have been a disaster and resulted in many people who meet the new requirements being terminated from health care coverage under Medicaid. When people impacted by these changes call for help, we need to make sure they are able to get through to talk with someone. So it is imperative that a permanent fix be adopted for the call center during the special session this fall, in time to meet the challenge.”

Sheldon Toubman, Litigation Attorney with DRCT, indicated that “While Connecticut officials are appropriately working on systems to try to improve on that frightening experience, the reality is that regularly establishing either that you are working or that you are exempt from working will be an enormous challenge and a human touch will be essential for many.”

Toubman emphasized that “An accessible call center where people can timely reach a knowledgeable person to get help to stay on benefits is necessary to prevent what we saw in those other states. And keep in mind that the same reason a person is unable to work may be the reason they cannot wait on hold for two hours, and that working people cannot take off two hours in the middle of the day to do this either. This must be addressed now before many people start falling through cracks beginning in 15 months.”

(Copy of correspondence attached.)

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