



February 26, 2025

The Honorable Young Kim
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Kim,

We are behavioral health and child-serving providers, workers, consumers, advocates, and family members, and we are urging you to reject Medicaid cuts, as proposed in the House Budget Reconciliation Framework. As drafted, the proposal would devastate California's Medicaid program, Medi-Cal, and would have particularly severe impacts on access to behavioral health services for California's children.

In California, 5 million children get their health care through Medi-Cal. This is roughly half of all kids in the state. In the counties that comprise Congressional District 40 – Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino – over 1 million children are enrolled in Medi-Cal. The nearly \$2 billion spent on Medi-Cal in your district just last year provides these children with basic preventive care, including vaccines, dental exams, and behavioral health treatment. This program is a lifeline for the children in your district and an economic engine for their communities.

As a result of structural racism, economic challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic, California children are experiencing an unprecedented behavioral health crisis. Rates of depression and anxiety in children have increased by 70% since 2017. One in three teenagers is now experiencing serious psychological distress and opioid-related overdoses among teens have tripled.

At the same time, behavioral health providers, workers, schools, and other child-serving institutions have risen to the challenge. Throughout Congressional District 40, schools are hiring more social workers and counselors, community-based providers are opening their doors to more young people, and health systems are launching innovative programs to address the mental health needs of young people. CalOptima, Orange County's Medi-Cal health plan, recently invested \$25 million in new resources at local schools including counselors, wellness programs, telehealth services, crisis screenings and other programs. The Orange County Health Care Agency operates 24/7 family stabilization teams which provide in-home support to children, families, and caregivers to prevent psychiatric hospitalizations.

But Congressional District 40 can't do this without Medicaid. The proposed cuts would mean that community-based behavioral health providers would close, schools would be forced to lay off counselors, hospital psychiatric departments would be eliminated, and children and families would be abandoned.

Furthermore, adding burdensome work requirements to Medicaid would directly harm children by kicking their caregivers off coverage. While the majority of adults enrolled in Medicaid are

working, the most common reason for not working is caregiving. Parents should not be forced to choose between providing care for their children and accessing health care. Children of parents without health coverage are also less likely to access health care, regardless of their own coverage status.

Please stand up for California children and families. Vote NO on any cuts to Medicaid.

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