

Protecting Medicaid: Not Just the Right Thing, The Smart Thing

*Written by Rosemary and Robert Wall,
Andrew Wall's parents*



Our son, Andrew Wall, age 31, has Down syndrome. He has lived in Mountain Lakes, NJ, his entire life. He received an excellent inclusive education in the Mountain Lakes Public Schools, including transition services to prepare him for a working adult life. Since graduating at the age of 21, Andrew has been continuously employed at the Gramon Family of Schools in Fairfield, NJ, for 20 hours per week as a culinary arts assistant in the school kitchen.

Andrew enjoys exercise classes and strength training at the local YMCA, hiking, skiing, surfing, and traveling. He participates in visual and performing arts. His paintings have been included in county and state-level art exhibits, and he has performed in community theater. Because real participation in the community is so important to Andrew's life, he has been actively interested in politics and current events and has voted in every local, state, and national election for which he has been eligible since he turned 18.

Andrew's ongoing level of accomplishment and independence is directly contingent on his continued access to the supports for employment and daily life provided under his budget with the New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities (NJDDD). NJDDD utilizes Medicaid funds to finance the services it provides to eligible New Jersey residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Andrew's ability to receive services under his NJDDD budget requires that he remain qualified for Medicaid. His budget provides necessary round trip transportation to and from his place of employment, membership at the local YMCA for his pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, and tuition for improving his life skills.

Round-trip transportation for work is especially critical. Andrew was born with small, congenital cataracts, which make it impossible to correct his vision to the standard required for a driver's license.

Without reliable transportation, which represents a significant part of Andrew's NJDDD budget, it is unlikely that Andrew could retain his competitive employment. His NJDDD services directly affect both Andrew's independence and his ability to participate in and contribute to the life of his community.

Cuts to Medicaid could result in Andrew losing both his health coverage and the crucial support provided by his NJDDD budget. A reduction in Medicaid would affect every aspect of Andrew's life, including his ability to continue contributing to his community and workplace and his hard-earned independence. The negative impact of these changes on Andrew's life cannot be overstated.

Preserving and protecting Medicaid allows for the employment and independence of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. By ensuring continued Medicaid coverage and access to needed supports, more citizens with disabilities, the nation's largest pool of untapped talents, can enter and enrich the nation's work force.

Protecting Medicaid is not just the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do.



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