

GOP Health Bill Plays Robin Hood in Reverse

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The “replacement” for the Affordable Care Act (also called Obamacare) crafted by GOP leadership would give the rich billions in tax cuts while causing millions of the most vulnerable — children, the poor, the sick, and the elderly — to lose health coverage.

- ▶ Like the House, the Senate is developing its bill without any **hearings or public input**.
- ▶ GOP Senate leadership is planning to unveil and possibly vote on its bill **before the July 4 recess**, according to multiple media reports.
- ▶ Like the NEA-opposed American Health Care Act (AHCA) passed by the House, the Senate bill is expected to radically restructure Medicaid, which provides health coverage for **36 million children**.
 - States could choose between a block grant (lump sum payment) and “per capita cap” (flat amount) for certain Medicaid beneficiaries.
 - Either way, state budgets would take a big hit with the share of revenue spent on Medicaid rising from 24.5 percent in 2017 to 28 percent by 2025, according to Moody’s Investors Service.
 - To compensate for the loss of federal support, states are likely to **divert money from education** to health care and limit the number of Medicaid beneficiaries, the scope of Medicaid benefits, or both.
- ▶ **Special needs students** would be among those hit the hardest.
 - Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Medicaid reimburses schools for mental health care, vision and hearing screenings, diabetes and asthma management, wheelchairs, hearing aids, and more.
 - That support is substantial — **\$4 billion per year**, according to AASA, the school superintendents association.
 - Capping federal support for Medicaid would shift costs to the states, jeopardizing services necessary for students to learn and thrive, especially those with disabilities.
- ▶ Other potential pitfalls include allowing states to exclude **essential benefits** — like prenatal care, mental health services, and addiction treatment — and permitting insurance companies to charge people with **pre-existing conditions** many times more than healthy people, as they did before the Affordable Care Act prohibited these practices.
- ▶ The House bill cuts taxes by \$200,000 per year for the **top 0.1 percent of earners**, according to the independent Tax Policy Center while retaining the 40 percent excise tax on “high cost” plans that will affect many educators and other public servants (the effective date is pushed back from 2020 to 2026).