

Seattle Times Op-Ed

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As a parent of child with a developmental disability, I have learned to expect the unexpected, depend on nothing and to know that each day will bring new challenges and surprises to an already complicated and busy life. My daughter is only 5 and these are already very clear to me. However, I am finding it difficult to accept my government making a decision to turn their back on my daughter and take away or significantly reduce the services that will allow her to live a fuller and less dependent life in the future. The AHCA and The Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 both propose significant cuts to the funding for Medicaid and then a Per Capita Cap beginning in 2020. What I understand is less people will be eligible and then there will be less funding for growth which will result in less funding to pay for services. What does that mean for Cassie, a 5 year old little girl who has cerebral palsy and global developmental delays? It means cuts to her speech therapy, which is already only once a week for 1 hour. She is saying vowels now and stringing consonants and vowels together, but without therapy she will not progress. It means cuts to physical therapy, also only 1 hour once a week where she is taking 5 steps without support now. It means cuts to occupational therapy also only 1 hour once a week where she is learning to chew, use her fine motor skills (picking up stuff, writing, etc.) and teaching her coping skills so she can deal with all the noise, touching and other sensory input she must face in a day.

What could all this mean for Cassie? A life where she is dependent on the system and her family. Where she cannot become a contributing member of society because she doesn't have basic life skills. The system she depends on may not even be around which leaves her family who will love her and always do whatever we can, but we will age and not be able to support her forever and then what? My daughter and many other children and adults with disabilities have so much potential. Medicaid funds the services that open doors for that potential to be realized. Not only do I fear for my daughter's future, I fear for our country's future. How can we justify taking money away from people and making them more dependent and thus costing more in the long run? The cuts to Medicaid are short sided and only harmful to the people who need the services the most. We must really look at who is being impacted and what that will mean in 3 years, 10 years, 20 years from now. I stand firm that there are better ways to fix a broken system and this is not going to solve any problems, it will only create more that are much more difficult to fix. I encourage you to reach out and share our story. We need to educate people before it is too late.