

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS AND HUMAN SERVICES
COMMITTEES CONCERNING A PROPOSED WAIVER TO CUT ELIGIBILITY IN THE
MEDICAID LIA PROGRAM
July 24, 2012

My name is Brett Stone, and I was born 25 years ago with Goldenhar Syndrome. I had no jaw nor ear on the right side, scoliosis, congenital spinal fusion, and a deviated septum. The misalignment in my jaw causes inflammation in my temporomandibular joint, migraines, back and neck pain, and sleep apnea. I'm also deaf on the right side. I've had several surgeries throughout childhood, but several more are still needed. I'm not able work right now because of my medical condition, but hope that I will be after these surgeries are done.

I'm now on the Low-Income Adult program. The proposed changes will disqualify me during the time in which my surgeries are planned, regardless of my family's ability to pay. Even if they were willing to add me to their insurance, my co-pays would be 25% of tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, which none of us can afford. This policy leaves me and many others with only two options: become homeless, or suffer with debilitating ailments without treatment. Needless to say, recovering from surgery while homeless is not advisable, and the alternative would be cruel.

According to a recent Harvard study, the uninsured are at 40% higher risk of death, leading to 45,000 preventable deaths annually in the U.S. That means that this waiver, could be a death sentence for some of us who will be unable to get any other coverage.

About 70% of pending Medicaid applications are already overdue for processing, many of which are lost, costing the state additional money for fines and employee wages. DSS is currently subject to a lawsuit as a result. The additional workload for re-evaluating all 80,000 Medicaid LIA recipients to determine their eligibility under a new policy will further exacerbate this crisis and neutralize efforts to bring the department into compliance with regulations. That's unacceptable.

Please vote "no" on this dangerous proposal.
Thank you.