



## FLORIDA HEALTH JUSTICE PROJECT

### Florida Health Justice Project Statement on the American Jobs Plan and Home-based HealthCare: Funds for Florida's Seniors and the Disabled

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#### **Florida Health Justice Project Supports \$400 billion for Home-Based Health Care Proposed in American Jobs Plan.**

##### ***Federal funds could transform life for Florida's Fragile Seniors and the Disabled***

(Miami, Florida) June 7, 2021—Florida Health Justice Project calls on Congress to support increased funding for Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) proposed under the President's American Jobs Plan.

“The American Jobs Plan provides the kind of essential investment needed for expanding access to HCBS services and strengthening the workforce,” says Miriam Harmatz, Florida Health Justice Project’s Advocacy Director and Founder. “Both are critical.”

While the recently enacted American Rescue Plan\* provides additional federal matching funds for HCBS, the ARP funding is only for one year. Going forward, the administration has proposed a \$400 [billion expansion](#) of HCBS in the new American Jobs Plan that is desperately needed by Florida families for this critically important and terribly under-funded system.

For low-wealth individuals who need nursing home level of care, Medicaid provides coverage for over half of all Floridians in nursing homes. A limited number of people who qualify for the nursing home benefit based on their low income and high level of need can enroll in the Long-Term Care managed care program that provides [home and community based services \(HCBS\)](#).

The American Jobs Plan expands access to Medicaid services for seniors and people with disabilities to provide the care they need to safely stay at home, including assistance with eating, bathing and other household activities. Home-based care allows individuals to live independently, age in dignity and even continue to participate in the community, instead of being cloistered in institutions with no sense of privacy or free will.

“This program is what keeps people like me going. It’s our lifeline,” said 75-year-old Florida resident [Alene Shaheed. Alene, who lives alone, is wheelchair bound after losing the loss of her legs following spinal surgery.](#) “Without Medicaid paying for my home

health services, I would be in a nursing home or assisted living. Like most people, I want to live independently in my own place."

State Medicaid programs are not required to provide home-based services. Consequently, many states, including Florida, have severely underfunded the programs. In Florida, there are 60,000 residents on the waiting list for these vital services. And even those who get off the waitlist face huge gaps in care due to lack of funding needed to support a sufficient workforce.

"People in my situation should not have to spend another day alone in their wheelchair without a caregiver," Alene says. "We need funding and incentives to increase the pool of workers willing to provide care for Medicaid patients." Alene is supposed to have a home health aide every single day to help her with the things she cannot do — bathing, changing, cooking, and cleaning. But days go by with no one showing up.

"Home-based care lets seniors age in place, in familiar surroundings, with the maximum amount of independence and dignity possible both for those who live alone as well as seniors with supportive family members," said Harmatz. "It's also important for younger, disabled individuals; it's critical they not be isolated in nursing homes and deprived of the opportunity for socialization and community participation. For both, it's a much less expensive alternative to institutional settings."

It's especially critical to begin funding home-based care as the US population ages precipitously beginning in 2030, when all baby boomers will be older than age 65 and 1 in every 5 residents will be retirement age, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).

*Home and community-based services resources: FHJP has developed a consumer flyer on Medicaid Home & Community Based Services (HCBS): "[Know Your Rights Flyer](#)", [a consumer HCBS information video](#) and a more detailed "[Advocate's Guide to the Florida Long-Term Care Waiver](#)." Information is provided to both caretakers and their advocates on applying for the program and trouble-shooting problems.*

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**Florida Health Justice Project (FHJP) recognizes that access to quality and affordable health care is a human right and engages in comprehensive advocacy to expand healthcare access and promote health equity for the most vulnerable, including expanding Medicaid, a move that would provide coverage to over a million Floridians, and bring in billions of federal dollars under the American Rescue Plan. [www.floridahealthjustice.org](http://www.floridahealthjustice.org)**

\*On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) (Pub. L. 117-2), which provides federal funds for some Medicaid home and community-based services through March 31, 2022. States must submit their plans on how to use the funds by June 12, 2021.