

Importance of Increased Funding for Florida's Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS):

Florida Needs the Better Care Better Jobs Act

What is HCBS?

Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS): Medicaid HCBS programs provide services that are not typically available through Medicare or standard medical insurance, such as personal care aides, home-delivered meals, and private duty nursing to low-income individuals who require significant assistance with basic activities of daily living.

Who receives HCBS in Florida?

iBudget and Long-term Care (LTC) Waiver: Most of Florida's HCBS are provided through either the iBudget Waiver for people with developmental disabilities or the LTC Waiver for frail seniors and adults with significant disabilities, as an alternative to institutionalization. [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)

Why is Increased HCBS Funding Critical for Florida?

- **Long Waitlists:** In 2020, there were tens of thousands of eligible Floridians on both the iBudget and LTC waitlists. This funding will allow more individuals to get off the waitlist and receive their care at home. [\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#).
- **Lack of Workforce:** Workers are terribly underpaid, and most do not have benefits. Thus, even people who get off the waitlist and enroll in a waiver often cannot get needed home care. Increased HCBS funding is essential in order to have an adequate workforce. As a result of the workforce shortage, too many Floridians who desperately need daily home health services rely on unpaid or underpaid family members, or go days at a time without aides. [\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)
- **Rapidly Growing Elderly Population:** Approximately 20% of Florida's population is 65 or over, and the growth rate for our senior population is among the highest in the country. [\[8\]](#) Statistically, over half of people turning 65 will at some point develop a severe disability or medical condition that will require HCBS. Given these demographics, increased HCBS funding is urgently needed. [\[9\]](#).
- **Low National Rankings:** Florida is currently ranked 43rd in spending on HCBS programs and 51st in AARP's Long Term Services and Supports Scorecard. [\[10\]](#)[\[11\]](#). Increased funding will help Florida improve upon this abysmal situation.
- **Cost Savings:** Because HCBS are significantly cheaper than nursing home care (approximately one-third of the cost), increased funding for home and community based services would save Florida taxpayers money. [\[12\]](#)

Where Will the Funding Come From?

The Better Care Better Jobs Act: Congress is now deciding whether to allocate the full \$400 Billion for HCBS that is included in the [Better Care Better Jobs Act](#) recovery package. This funding is absolutely critical in helping to ensure that HCBS is accessible and equitable.

Endnotes

- [1] Developmental Disabilities Individual Budgeting (iBudget) Waiver, https://ahca.myflorida.com/Medicaid/hcbs_waivers/ibudget.shtml.
- [2] Long-Term Care, https://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/Policy_and_Quality/Policy/federal_authorities/federal_waivers/LTC.shtml
- [3] *About the iBudget DD Waiver and Waitlist*, Florida's DD Waitlist Campaign (Jan. 2021).
- [4] *Department of Elder Affairs Statewide Analysis Assessed Prioritized Consumer List Totals by Assessed Rank Level and Program* (Apr. 23, 2020) at 1.
- [5] <https://archive.floridahealthstories.org/thelma>
- [6] <https://archive.floridahealthstories.org/alene-ltc-2>
- [7] <https://archive.floridahealthstories.org/shirley>
- [8] Christine L. Himes & Lilian Kilduff, *Which U.S. States Have the Oldest Populations?*, Population Reference Bureau (Mar. 16, 2019)
- [9] *Long-Term Services and Supports State Scorecard 2020 Edition* at 20. The LTSS scorecard is a complete and comprehensive assessment of LTSS system performance across five key characteristics: (1) Affordability and Access, (2) Choice of Setting and Provider, (3) Quality of life and Quality of Care, (4) Support for Family Caregivers, and (5) Effective Transitions.
- [10] Molly O'Malley Watts, et al., *Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Enrollment and Spending* at 16.
- [11] *Long-Term Services and Supports State Scorecard 2020 Edition* at 12-13.
- [12] See *Statewide Medicaid Managed Care (SMMC) Long-Term Care (LTC) Program Monthly Base Rates*, (Oct. 2020 - Sept. 2021)(finding that The cost of a Nursing Facility in Florida is approximately three (3) times the cost of long-term care services under the waiver).