



April 2019

## **New Research Shows Strong Support for Medicaid. Most Voters Want to Expand the Program So More Can Get Affordable Coverage.**

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New research by PerryUndem (non-partisan) and Bellwether Research & Consulting (Republican), for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), shows most voters have strongly positive feelings about the Medicaid program. Two recent surveys show that Medicaid, like Medicare, is a popular program even as federal and state officials seek to change program rules, adjust how it is funded, and add new reporting requirements.

These ideas are out of sync with where most voters are on the Medicaid program. Specifically, the research finds that a majority of voters supports raising income limits of Medicaid so more people can qualify. They feel people earning \$17,000 a year (the most an individual can earn and still qualify for Medicaid in most states) cannot afford to pay for health insurance. Also, most favor a new policy idea – allowing people to buy into Medicaid in order to obtain affordable health coverage. They want *more* access to Medicaid, not *less*.

These surveys also find little appetite for cutting Medicaid or putting barriers in the way of people accessing the program. The majority of voters pushes back on turning Medicaid into a block grant – an idea popular in the Administration – likely because they worry it will lead to cuts in the program. On the issue of work requirements in Medicaid, this research shows voters feel states should not rush into these changes if added bureaucracy and red tape will mean qualified people will mistakenly lose their health coverage.

Following are detailed findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Details of research: 1) A survey of 1,000 registered voters 18+ years old. The survey was conducted March 15 – 21, 2019 using YouGov's nationally representative panel. The margin of sampling error on the total results: +/- 3.1 percentage points. 2) An omnibus survey of 846 registered voters 18+ years old. The survey was conducted March 20-21, 2019 using YouGov's nationally representative panel. The margin of sampling error on the total results: +/- 3.4 percentage points. Both surveys were sponsored by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.

# FINDINGS

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## Voters value Medicaid.

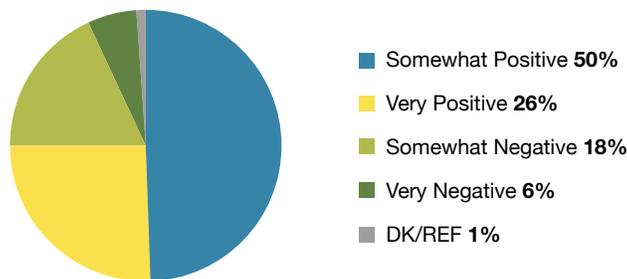
Three in four voters (76%) feel positively about Medicaid and more than 9 in 10 (92%) feel it is an important program. These positive feelings cut across political party ideology, with most Democratic (89%), Independent (75%), and Republican (60%) voters holding positive impressions of Medicaid. Most (70%) also believe Medicaid plays a major role in helping low-income families and individuals support themselves financially.

## They are more likely to view Medicaid as health insurance than welfare (43% health insurance vs. 23% welfare).

However, one quarter (26%) think of the program as both health insurance and welfare equally. There is a partisan split on this issue: a large share of Democrats (59% health insurance vs. 9% welfare) and a plurality of Independents (36% health insurance vs. 25% welfare) lean toward seeing Medicaid as health insurance while Republicans (29% health insurance vs. 42% welfare) lean toward seeing the program as welfare.

### Q: Just based on what you know, do you have a positive or negative impression of Medicaid? (n=1,000)

*76% Positive Impression*



# FINDINGS

## Seven in 10 (72%) support raising Medicaid's income eligibility levels.

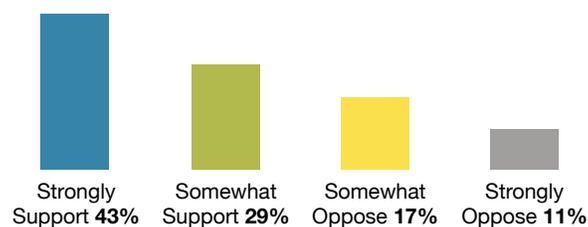
There is support for expanding Medicaid across party: Democrats (85%), Independents (73%), and Republicans (57%). Almost 9 in 10 voters (87%) agree that an individual earning \$17,000 a year (the income limit for Medicaid in the majority of states) cannot afford to pay for private health insurance.

When told there are 14 states that still have lower income eligibility levels, the majority of voters (53%) responded that these states should raise their Medicaid limits to \$17,000 a year for a single adult and to \$34,000 a year for an adult in a family of four (25% said these states should keep their lower limits and 22% said they weren't sure.) Democrats (58% raise limits vs. 29% keep current limits), Independents (52% vs. 21%), and Republicans (50% vs. 20%) are all inclined to support increasing eligibility levels.

The survey also found surprisingly strong support for allowing people to buy into Medicaid – a new policy idea being discussed in a few states and nationally. Specifically, the survey found that 8 in 10 voters (83%) support their state allowing people to buy Medicaid coverage in order to get more affordable health coverage. Support spans across party ID: Democrats (91% support buy-in), Independents (81% support buy-in), and Republicans (78% support buy-in).

### Q: Do you support or oppose your state raising the income eligibility level for Medicaid so that more uninsured people can qualify? (n=1,000)

*72% Support Raising Limits*



# FINDINGS

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## **The majority of voters do not support turning Medicaid into a block grant.**

After reading a description of Medicaid block grants, the majority of voters oppose them (59% oppose vs. 41% support). There is a partisan divide on this issue: Democrats (80% oppose vs. 20% support); Independents (61% oppose vs. 39% support); and Republicans (27% oppose vs. 73% support).

The Administration supports turning Medicaid into a block grant and possibly bypassing Congress to get this done. When asked about this, two-thirds of voters (64%) agree that the Administration should get the approval of Congress first if they want to pursue this policy.

### *Description*

*Medicaid is jointly funded through the federal government and state governments. For every Medicaid dollar a state spends, the federal government reimburses the state for a portion of their costs. The President is considering a change to this system and, instead, give states a set amount of money – called a “block grant”. Some say that this change will give states more flexibility to run Medicaid and set their own rules. Others say that block grants are really just the federal government cutting money to states because they will get less money to run the program overall and may have to cut people or services or raise additional state tax dollars to maintain the program.*

## **Seven in 10 voters agree their states should not rush into imposing new work reporting requirements in Medicaid if extra red tape and bureaucracy will lead to qualified people losing their health coverage.**

Voters were told about work reporting requirements that some states are considering (and Arkansas is already implementing). Afterward, they were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

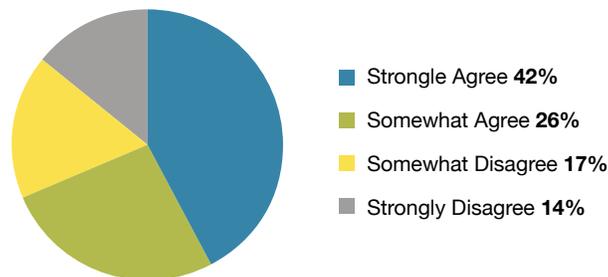
# FINDINGS

*“This new requirement to file paperwork with the government every month means more bureaucracy and red tape and it will cost taxpayers more. It also makes it more likely people who are still eligible for the program will mistakenly have their health care taken away. So, someone could lose their coverage even while still in treatment for a condition like cancer. We shouldn’t rush a change like this. We need to make sure everyone who qualifies for Medicaid and follows the rules gets the care they need. They shouldn’t be afraid of losing treatment because of paperwork.”*

In response, 7 in 10 (69%) agreed their state should not rush into these new requirements while one-third (31%) disagreed. There is surprising consistency across party ID when it comes to concerns about the added red tape and bureaucracy of these proposed requirements: Democrats (70% agree); Independents (65% agree); and Republicans (73% agree). The high level of support among Republicans is likely driven by their concern that people who “qualify for Medicaid and follows the rules” could lose their Medicaid. While they tend to be frustrated with those who abuse and take advantage of Medicaid, they do not want rule-abiding beneficiaries to lose their health coverage because of bureaucracy.

**Voters in the Some states are considering new reporting requirements for people to prove they are working or actively trying to get a job in order to keep their health insurance through Medicaid. If people do not meet these monthly reporting requirements, they will be cut from the Medicaid program and will not be allowed to apply again for 6 months or a year in some states. Tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement about these new reporting requirements: (n=848)**

69% Agree



*“This new requirement to file paperwork with the government every month means more bureaucracy and red tape and it will cost taxpayers more. It also makes it more likely people who are still eligible for the program will mistakenly have their health care taken away. So someone could lose their coverage even while still in treatment for a condition like cancer. We shouldn’t rush a change like this. We need to make sure everyone who qualifies for Medicaid and follows the rules gets the care they need. They shouldn’t be afraid of losing treatment because of paperwork.”*

# CONCLUSIONS

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Like many surveys before, this new research shows that Medicaid is a valued program and that most voters have positive feelings towards it. While the legacy of Medicaid as a welfare program still lingers, voters are now more likely to see the program as health insurance more than anything else. Voters seem clear in their desire to increase access to Medicaid through increasing the income limits of the program and allowing those outside of the income eligibility limits to buy into Medicaid. This strong support for expansion is likely driven by frustration over the high costs of health coverage and wanting more affordable options, like Medicaid, to be available to more Americans.

Consistent with these feelings, voters seem to resist efforts to cut the program or make it harder for people to qualify or stay enrolled. They lean against block grants, an idea being considered currently by officials in the Administration, and when told about the potential for qualified people to lose Medicaid due to new work reporting requirements, they seem to push back on those too. Voters generally do not like paying for more bureaucracy and empathize with qualified people losing Medicaid simply due to errors and the inability to overcome the extra hurdles these rules create.

For more information about this survey, please contact Carter Steger, Vice President State & Local Campaigns – [carter.steger@cancer.org](mailto:carter.steger@cancer.org).