

May 12, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House

Dear Leader Thune, Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, and Leader Jeffries:

The undersigned organizations write in partnership with the National Health Collaborative on Violence and Abuse (NHCVA), a coalition of nonpartisan medical and public health organizations focused on preventing and addressing violence across the lifespan. NHCVA is the successor to the American Medical Association's National Advisory Council on Violence and Abuse.

As Congress considers changes to Medicaid, we write to highlight its critical role in preventing and treating violence. Medicaid is essential to preventing, identifying, and intervening to address child abuse, intimate partner violence (IPV), elder abuse, and other forms of violence. Cuts or major structural changes to Medicaid would undermine this vital work.

Violence and Abuse Harm Health

Each year, people of all ages experience violence and abuse that harms their current and long-term health. In Fiscal Year 2023, a reported 545,159 children experienced abuse and neglect, and an estimated 2,000 died from maltreatment.¹

Experiencing or witnessing violence or abuse is an adverse childhood experience (ACE), which is associated with poorer health outcomes that require additional health intervention across the lifespan, including heart disease, depression, cancer, diabetes, and suicide.²

Intimate partner violence is abuse or aggression in a romantic relationship. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) note that 41 percent of women and 26 percent of men experience sexual or physical violence or stalking from an intimate partner in their lifetime.³ The total lifetime social cost per IPV victim is \$103,767 for women and \$23,414 for men, when counting costs including medical care, lost productivity, and criminal justice.⁴

Ten percent of older adults who live at home experience abuse. From 2002 to 2016, nearly 650,000 older adults received emergency department treatment for nonfatal assaults, and 19,000 were homicide

¹ <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/cm2023.pdf>

² See CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html>

³ See CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/about/index.html>

⁴ Peterson C, Kearns MC, McIntosh WL, Estefan LF, Nicolaidis C, McCollister KE, & Florence C. (2018). Lifetime Economic Burden of Intimate Partner Violence Among U.S. Adults. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 55(4), 433–444.

victims.⁵ Over 400,000 older adults experienced assaults in 2022, and the average medical cost of their emergency department treatment was over \$18,000.⁶

Violence continues to occur at unacceptably high levels in the U.S. The most recent FBI data show nearly 60,000 aggravated assaults and over 1,300 homicides in 2023.⁷ Medicaid-funded services can prevent abuse and violence, identify it early, intervene to treat it, and address higher long-term health needs, including higher rates of chronic illness associated with unaddressed early trauma.

Medicaid Promotes Child Health and Safety

Medicaid covers 41 percent of all births, nearly half of all children, and over 80 percent of children living in poverty.^{8,9} Higher levels of child health coverage through Medicaid are associated with lower rates of substantiated physical abuse.¹⁰ Children whose parents have Medicaid coverage also have fewer screened-in child neglect cases.^{11,12} Medicaid's comprehensive coverage is critical for addressing those needs, particularly with the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit.

Medicaid Prevents and Addresses Intimate Partner Violence

Preventing IPV begins with effective education and promotion of protective factors early in life. The evidence is clear that we can reduce IPV through effective interventions. Access to quality care improves the chance to promote healthy relationships among adolescents, laying the groundwork for preventing IPV. Access to physical and mental health services is associated with reduced risk for IPV.¹³ Medicaid coverage is also critical for access to care for screening and identification of IPV, and connection to services. When IPV does occur, it leads to higher likelihood of chronic health conditions, including mental health needs resulting from trauma. Medicaid provides access to care to address those needs so survivors can heal.

Medicaid Protects Older Adults from Harm

Older adults rely on Medicaid for an array of supports and services. 7.2 million low-income seniors are dually enrolled in Medicaid and Medicare.¹⁴ Medicaid pays for 63 percent of nursing home residents

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/elder-abuse/about/index.html>

⁶ Peterson C, Haileyesus T, Herbst JH, Gerald MS, Florence C. Economic Cost of US Older Adult Assault Injuries. *JAMA Network Open*. 2024 October 4; 7(10):e2437644. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.37644

⁷ <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend>

⁸ <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/10-things-to-know-about-medicaid/#:~:text=Medicaid%20covers%2041%25%20of%20all,43%25>

⁹ <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/10-things-to-know-about-medicaid/>

¹⁰ McCray, N. (2018). Child health care coverage and reductions in child physical abuse. *Heliyon*, 4(11).

¹¹ Brown, E. C., Garrison, M. M., Bao, H., Qu, P., Jenny, C., & Rowhani-Rahbar, A. (2019). Assessment of rates of child

maltreatment in states with Medicaid expansion vs states without Medicaid expansion. *JAMA Network Open*, 2(6), e195529-e195529. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.5529>

¹² McGinty, E. E., Nair, R., Assini-Meytin, L. C., Stuart, E. A., & Letourneau, E. J. (2022). Impact of Medicaid expansion on reported incidents of child neglect and physical abuse. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 62(1), e11-

e20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2021.06.010>

¹³ <https://www.cdc.gov/intimate-partner-violence/risk-factors/index.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/eligibility/seniors-medicare-and-medicaid-enrollees/index.html>

nationally.¹⁵ Over half of Medicaid spending is for people who are eligible because of age and/or disability, and 16 percent of spending on this group is for long-term care.¹⁶ Medicaid-funded services and supports are key to protecting older adults from harm and ensuring they have the comprehensive well-coordinated care they need to address it. Medicaid-funded long-term care also provides vital skilled care services that can reduce the risk of elder abuse.

Medicaid supports needed prevention, identification, and intervention to address violence and abuse. Our organizations oppose any cuts or changes to Medicaid that would undermine this important role. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Kiersten Stewart, Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy at Futures Without Violence, at kstewart@futureswithoutviolence.org.

Sincerely,
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
Futures Without Violence
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National League of Nursing

¹⁵ <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-of-certified-nursing-facilities-by-primary-payer-source/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

¹⁶ <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/5-key-facts-about-medicaid-eligibility-for-seniors-and-people-with-disabilities/>