Work/Community Engagement Requirements

What's In The Bill: Both the House and Senate versions of reconciliation legislation would create work/community engagement requirements for certain individuals as a condition of enrolling in or maintaining Medicaid eligibility.

Impact: Work requirements are likely to disproportionately harm those experiencing mental health and substance use challenges. While exemptions are included for certain people with "disabling mental disorders" and "substance abuse disorders" these exemptions are not automatic, and the burden will be on individuals to prove that they qualify when this new guidance is implemented by states.

Some of these individuals may not have a regular healthcare provider, making it hard to secure the required documentation needed to comply with these new requirements. Even those individuals who are working enough hours may risk losing coverage if they cannot consistently document and submit proof of their hours.

Additionally, two states that have imposed Medicaid work requirements, Arkansas and Georgia, saw tens of thousands of eligible enrollees lose coverage and experience high administrative costs. Of those disenrolled in Arkansas, **97%** were compliant or had exemptions but still lost coverage. That is, they lost coverage for administrative reasons.

Bottom Line: Work can be an important tool to help many Americans advance and gain independence from assistance, but penalizing individuals who are not able to comply with these requirements could deny them of necessary and timely healthcare.

Our Ask: Remove the work/community engagement requirements from reconciliation legislation.

Talking Points:

- Work requirements fail to account for fluctuating symptoms, treatment needs, or crises, especially for individuals not yet diagnosed or engaged in care.

- Some people experiencing mental health or substance use challenges may also experience significant clinical episodes that make consistent employment difficult.

- People experiencing significant mental health and substance use challenges, especially those who change addresses frequently or are homeless, may not be able to navigate websites that frequently have errors and are difficult to use, and some are working jobs that may not provide the newly required documentation.