Nearly 20 percent of U.S. children (14.6 million children under age 18) have special health care needs, encompassing a broad range of chronic illnesses and/or disabilities (e.g., cerebral palsy, autism, mental illness, traumatic brain injury). These children rely on Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to get the care they need. **One in five families with children has at least one child with special health care needs.** These families rely on Medicaid and/or the ACA to protect them from medical debt or bankruptcy. Therefore, Family Voices urges Members of Congress to do no harm to children:

- Reject Medicaid per capita caps or block grants. ♦ Preserve ACA protections and health benefits.

**Medicaid is vital for CYSHCN and their families:**

- About **43.4 percent** of CYSHCN – **6.3 million** – rely on Medicaid or CHIP. (For about 8 percent of these children Medicaid supplements private insurance, covering services and items not covered by their private plan, such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, and assistive devices.)
- Medicaid allows CYSHCN to get the medical treatment, medications, equipment, therapies, and other services and supplies they need to stay as healthy as possible, thus avoiding excess and costly hospitalizations or ER visits.
- Medicaid covers early and periodic screening, and diagnosis and treatment of developmental and health problems early in a child’s life, helping to avoid more expensive treatment or special education later on.
- Medicaid protects families of CYSHCN from extraordinary medical debt or bankruptcy.
- Medicaid allows some parents to work and pay taxes by providing home health care for seriously ill children who need it.

If Medicaid is subject to per capita caps or block grants, states will have less money in the long run, forcing them to significantly reduce Medicaid coverage and/or services. Moreover, they will not be able to respond to outbreaks (like microcephaly from the Zika virus), or to cover new diagnostic methods, treatments or medications; with block grants states also will be unable to respond to economic downturns.

**The ACA’s consumer protections and benefits are of particular importance to the 53.3 percent of CYSHCN (7.7 million) with private insurance.** These include:

- Protections for children with pre-existing conditions, without which they would never be able to get insurance, would be charged higher premiums, and/or would be denied coverage for their pre-existing conditions.
- Elimination of annual and lifetime benefit caps, and caps on out-of-pocket expenditures, ensuring that children can get the care they need without imposing unsupportable costs on their families.
- Allowing young adults to stay on their parents’ insurance policies until age 26, and providing Medicaid to former foster children until age 26.
- Critical health benefits, including “habilitation” services needed to acquire and maintain skills (e.g., physical therapy for children with cerebral palsy so they can learn to walk, or speech therapy for children with hearing impairments). The ACA also ensures that children get critical oral and vision care and behavioral health services.
- No-cost preventive care, including check-ups and screenings to detect and treat health or developmental problems early in a child’s life, helping to avoid more expensive treatment or special education later on.
- Medicaid expansion to all individuals with incomes up to 138% of the federal poverty level, which helps young adults and others with chronic illnesses or disabilities who do not have access to employer-based insurance.