



**Testimony Before**

**Representative Danny K. Davis  
Representative Mike Quigley  
Representative Bobby L. Rush  
Representative Jan Schakowsky**

**United States House of Representatives**

**Impact of Reduced Federal Medicaid Spending**

**Provided by  
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My name is Sharon Canariato, a registered nurse (RN) currently serving as the Deputy Executive Director of the Illinois Nurses Association (INA). I have been an RN for almost twenty-five years, practicing in a variety of settings, including hospital direct care, global health and health policy. It is an honor to be with you today to discuss the potential impact of reduced federal Medicaid spending. Founded in 1896, the American Nurses Association (ANA) is the only full-service national association representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses (RNs), and advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace and sharing a constructive and realistic view of nursing's contribution to the health of our nation.

ANA and its members believe we have an ethical obligation to participate in the healthcare policy arena to advocate for quality care that is accessible and affordable to all patients and consumers. ANA remains committed to the principle that health care is a basic human right and that all persons are entitled to ready access to affordable, quality health care services. ANA supports a health system that ensures universal access to a standard package of essential health care services for all individuals and families.

Medicaid provides vital health care coverage to more than 58 million of the nation's most vulnerable populations. Medicaid finances care for 30 percent of all children, 68 percent of low income children and covers 70 percent of nursing home residents. In Illinois, more than 559,000 Illinois seniors and individuals with disabilities rely on Medicaid<sup>1</sup>. In the last few years, Medicaid has also provided a reliable health insurance safety net for low income working families that have lost their health insurance. It also serves as the nation's largest payer of nursing home care, and each year, Medicaid helps millions of families with the cost of home based long-term care services.

ANA believes that any cuts to the Medicaid system would swell the ranks of the uninsured and threaten the viability of nursing homes, hospitals, and other needed providers. As frontline health care practitioners, America's nurses are aware that any cut will only further contribute to emergency department overcrowding, delayed diagnosis of life-threatening diseases, increased reliance on charity care, and increased expenditures for preventable health complications. Such dramatic changes to this important program deserve further scrutiny and public comment. Compassion and common sense should prevail. ANA believes that our nation should provide basic health services to those who require them. The first step in this direction is to abandon plans to cut funding for health care for the medically needy and indigent. Now is not the time to reduce access to needed health care services. ANA will strongly oppose large scale cuts in Medicaid.

The ANA prides itself on our long history as patient advocates. Patient advocacy has always been at the core of nursing and ANA takes that responsibility very seriously. We strongly believe that Medicaid must continue to provide coverage based on Federal standards that ensure maximal access for low income and special needs populations, with funding allocations based on the needs of these populations. Furthermore, we believe that any savings realized from the restructuring of Medicaid must be reinvested in the program. ANA also opposes the use of vouchers or Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs) as alternatives to a standard benefit program. Medicaid must maintain at least the basic set of benefits now available.

### **Closing**

As the largest single group of clinical health care practitioners within the health care system, licensed registered nurses are on the front lines of care and experience the positive or negative impact of Congress' decisions. We strongly believe that affordable, accessible, quality, health care should not be a partisan or political issue. Once again the American Nurses Association thanks you for the opportunity to testify today. ANA appreciates your clear commitment to preserving and protecting the Medicaid program to ensure that essential health care services are provided to individuals and families across the country. ANA and registered nurses around the country are ready to work with you and other policy-makers to ensure that our nation's most vulnerable citizens are not at risk. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> "Cutting Medicaid in Illinois: Harming Seniors and People with Disabilities." *Familiesusa.com*. Families USA, May 2011. Web. 8 June 2011. <<http://familiesusa2.org/assets/pdfs/long-term-care/cutting-medicaid/Illinois.pdf>> .