

ADVOCATES FOR DISABLED URGE FEDS TO REJECT CUTS TO CALIFORNIA MEDICAID

The Hill -

Aug. 25, 2011: A consortium of 33 advocacy groups for people with disabilities on Thursday urged federal regulators to reject California's request to cut the state's Medicaid program.

Gov. Jerry Brown has asked for permission to slash his state's Medicaid reimbursement rates by 10 percent to help plug a \$26.6 billion budget gap.

Advocates say the cuts would be particularly harmful to people with disabilities, and are urging federal regulators to reject California's request.

"With cuts this deep we are concerned that some service providers could go out of business and people with disabilities would lose access to critical services," the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities wrote in a letter to Medicare and Medicaid chief Don Berwick.

The letter goes on to urge federal officials to thoroughly examine how access to care would be affected if deep Medicaid cuts were approved.

"The necessity of strong CMS oversight of Medicaid rate-setting by the states is more important than ever," the letter reads. "CMS should be scrutinizing those states where cuts endanger people's ability to live successfully in the community ... [and] ensure that states set and maintain their Medicaid rate structures at levels to assure that ... enrollees can access necessary services."

Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-Calif.) has also urged Berwick to reject proposed cuts to services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, The Hill reported last month.

Brown made the request on June 30, setting in motion a 90-day federal review period. Federal officials have said they will require California to provide more information about the request's potential impact on access to care, which should delay a final decision.