

Bill of the Week

Public Assistance Reform (HF 2716)

This Bill restricts access to food assistance (SNAP and WIC), Medicaid, and other public assistance programs; expands the Medicaid for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MEPD) program; and gives rural providers a boost in reimbursement.

Facts at a Glance

- Increases income limits for the Medicaid for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MEPD) program to 300% of the federal poverty level (up from 250% FPL), does not include a pension as an asset (like other retirement accounts), and requires an electronic option for paying premiums.
- Increases Medicaid reimbursement for home and community-based services (HCBS) providers serving rural lowans with disabilities.
- Puts special population nursing facility reimbursement into law and requires Iowa Medicaid to review and report on exceptions to policy.
- Increases the income threshold for Iowa Health & Wellness Plan (IHWP) members must pay a monthly premium to 100% of FPL (up from 50%).
- Requires IHWP members to pay copays for dental (\$5), medicines (\$1), misuse of the emergency room (\$8), and missed appointments (\$5). Adds \$5/month premium for a year if the person does not do the required wellness activities.
- Requires citizenship checks for all public assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, IHWP, hawki, child care assistance).
- Takes back unused SNAP benefits after 91 days of inactivity, disregards income earned by a K-12 student living at home and automatically verifies income for SNAP using one of several federal databases.
- Establishes a work group to look for ways to better serve high acuity children and youth who are Medicaid and IHWP members.
- Prohibits Iowa Medicaid from applying for any Medicaid waiver without legislative approval, unless it saves money or is cost neutral.

About the Sponsor



Rep. Austin Harris is from Appanoose County. He represents Appanoose County and parts of Davis, Monroe, and Wapello Counties. He serves on the Commerce, Health/Human Services, and Natural Resources and State Government

Key Points & Impacts

- This bill will make it harder to get and keep public assistance programs and citizenship checks may delay getting the help people need.
- People eligible to receive these benefits may not have access to reliable transportation and childcare, causing them to miss appointments.
- Copays may become a disincentive to going to the dentist and may cause people to ration their medicine.
- Babies born to undocumented women and other women legally in the country would lose access to formula (WIC).
- Students could work and save for college without putting their family's income over the SNAP limit.
- People with disabilities would be able to earn about \$7,000/year more without losing their MEPD eligibility.
- There is less paperwork for people applying for benefits if eligibility can be verified using existing databases.
- There may be fewer exceptions to policy, so people might not get the services they really need. ChildServe & On With Life would no longer have to file exceptions to policy for their special population nursing facility rate.

