**End the Medicaid Crisis in the Show-Me State**

**Take Care of Missouri’s Seniors!**

By John Kotovsky

The Show-Me State is in a Medicaid crisis, one of its own making: **Missouri is not providing adequate reimbursement for Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Medicaid.** As a result, care may be compromised for our state’s most frail senior citizens.

According to Missouri’s own formula, $178 is required each day to provide care for every skilled nursing resident in the state. But Missouri pays only $153. The resulting $25 shortfall per diem puts the Show-Me State in a precarious position. And an embarrassing one.

Despite the fact that Missouri knows the cost of care and sets its Medicaid rate accordingly, it pays just $15.26 out of its general revenue for each of its skilled nursing residents. That is not enough to provide even average care. Missouri’s neighboring states, on the other hand, pay on average $48.22 per day, more than three times the amount Missouri does. Bottom line? **Missouri is neglecting its senior citizens.**

I should know. I’m from Missouri. And my life’s work depends on my state’s support of Medicaid for older adults. I am the CEO of Lutheran Senior Services with Life Plan Communities throughout St. Louis, Central Missouri, and Illinois.

What happens when Medicaid funds are not there for our seniors? Well, the care is not there, quite frankly. There are fewer Medicaid beds supported and nowhere for skilled nursing patients to go. It’s simple math.

But Missouri has turned this simple math into a complicated formula, resulting in one of the lowest per diems in the United States. Here’s how it works…or doesn’t: The state of Missouri requires all care centers to submit detailed information each year on the cost of care for those Medicaid patients they serve. The numbers submitted by care centers are then used by the state to calculate the reimbursement rate based on its own formula.

Here’s where it gets fuzzy. Though actual costs for skilled nursing care tend to be higher than the state of Missouri allowance, the state pays *less* per patient per day (PPD) than its own calculations stipulate. Twenty-five dollars less. And many skilled nursing providers don’t have the means to make up for the shortfall**.**

What makes a bad situation even worse is the fact that Missouri is producing seniors at a faster rate than most states. With a higher median age than 28 other states, Missouri is likely to see increases in Medicaid applications sooner. Add baby boomers into the mix, and the problem will be magnified. We simply cannot afford to stay silent about the long-term consequences of our state’s neglect of the elderly.

In the senior living industry, we use the term “aging in place” to describe the continuum of care offered by Life Plan Communities such as ours. “Aging in place” means seniors can stay in one community as their needs change. But what if our “community” is the state of Missouri? And what if “aging in place" means having nowhere to go?

It is not just the businessman in me that is angered and saddened by our state’s misguided priorities. It is the servant. I am an ordained minister with a responsibility to 11,000 seniors throughout the region.

I do not make it a habit of taking a public stance on political issues. But this is not a political issue. It’s a moral one. Anyone who feels the way I do *must* advocate for those who can’t. We must stand up for those who have raised us and led us and taught us. We must demand that our lawmakers **reimburse Medicaid for the full SNF amount**. This is no time for Missourians to be silent.

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