

Congress Must Protect Transportation to Doctor Appointments for Low-Income Constituents

Background: Transportation is a basic and necessary step to ensure a person's ability to obtain well-coordinated health care and access to medical services. What would be an effortless and straightforward task for many people, such as visiting the doctor's office or picking up medication from the pharmacy, can be an enormous challenge for the elderly, the chronically ill and low-income constituents.

Every year, approximately 3.6 million Americans, urban and rural, miss or delay essential, non-emergency medical care because they experience transportation barriers. The simple issue of not being able to find or purchase a ride to the doctor's office can, ultimately, result in poor health outcomes and enormous health care costs, especially for those who are chronically ill.

Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) provides trips for people who may not have a working vehicle or driver's license; are unable to travel alone; or have a physical, mental or developmental disability. Provided through Medicaid, NEMT is a critical service for people who have no means of transportation to and from their medical visits. NEMT is a cost-saving approach that ensures consistent access to health care and provides greater opportunities to screen, diagnose and treat chronic conditions.

In recent years, however, due to ongoing concerns regarding Medicaid funding and administrative challenges in delivering health care services, policymakers are re-examining the value of providing NEMT to their beneficiaries. We believe that NEMT is a key driver of health outcomes and costs that must be protected to ensure access and equity in our health care system.

Administration's Plan: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is drafting a proposed rule that would make it easier for states to stop paying for NEMT for Medicaid beneficiaries. Proponents of limiting NEMT services claim the strategy will cut escalating costs and more closely mirror private insurance benefits.

Request: The Transportation Alliance urges Congress to **pass legislation ensuring NEMT services are protected under Medicaid.**



THE FACTS:

- Medicaid provides \$3 billion in NEMT trips annually (Kaiser Family Foundation).
- This spending accounts for roughly 103 million trips each year (Texas A&M Transportation Institute).
- NEMT is believed to save Medicaid \$40 million **per month** (\$480 million annually) for every 30,000 beneficiaries receiving treatment (Medical Transportation Access Coalition).
- For every \$1 spent on NEMT, states save more than \$11 by avoiding expensive emergency room and hospital stay costs (Florida State University).
- Three states have obtained waivers to opt out of providing NEMT services to some of their Medicaid clients: Iowa, Indiana and Kentucky.