

## ***Florida News Connection***

A statewide news service for Florida

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### **Fla CHAIN: Medicaid Reform Pilot Expansion May Not Be Healthy for Patients**

The Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (ACHA) is pushing for an expansion of the Medicaid Reform Pilot plan in the next legislative session, but the largest provider is now joining the ranks of companies that have left the program due to fee cuts. Laura Goodhue, executive director of Florida CHAIN says the fee cuts have also resulted in service cuts for patients. She says the economic stimulus plan may bring new life to the Medicaid program, if the funds are not used to meet other budget shortfalls.

**Intro:** As the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (ACHA) lobbies to expand the Medicaid Reform Pilot program to include more counties across the state, Wellcare, the program's largest provider, says it will pull out on May 1st, leaving about 80-thousand people scrambling for new coverage. This is the latest in a series of five companies dropping out of the Medicaid pilot program in the last six months, due to cuts in reimbursement rates. Laura Goodhue, executive director of the healthcare advocacy group, Florida CHAIN, says expanding the program may not be healthy for patients. She says it promised to improve patient care while cutting costs, but it has not delivered.

**:12** *"It's not working, it's not saving taxpayers money, and its not making Medicaid patients healthier and they need to address the real problems, which is cost containment and a lack of focus on preventative medicine and primary care."*

**Tag:** An ACHA spokesperson says fee cuts were necessary because of the statewide budget cuts, but no one will go without services, because the remaining companies can pick up the slack.

**Second Cut:** Goodhue says Florida Medicaid rolls are the fastest growing in the nation with a 10 per cent increase in the last year. She says these patients are choosing from an ever-shrinking pool of insurance companies and doctors, who, frustrated by fee cuts, are providing less care.

**:10** *"You have health plans that are able to limit the scope of the services that people can be provided, and as a result, you have people that don't get proper care, and we've seen some disastrous results from that."*

**Third Cut:** She says help may be on the way with 4-billion dollars in the federal economic stimulus plan that is earmarked for Florida Medicaid – if legislators do not use that money in the general fund instead.

**:12** *"We would hope that rates could be restored and the providers would restore services, but we're also hearing that the state government may not use that 4 billion dollars earmarked for Medicaid on Medicaid consumers."*

#### **OPTIONAL REPORTER WRAP: uses first soundbite(s)**

LEDE: Another company pulls out of the Medicaid reform pilot program, just as agency officials are seeking to expand to more counties. As Gina Presson reports, some say expansion isn't in the patient's best interest.

**1:00** *Outcue...Gina Presson reporting*

**Note to Editors: Note to Editors: Laura Goodhue 954-986-6535 [www.floridachain.org](http://www.floridachain.org)**