

A big betrayal

Randi Weingarten

President, AFT

President Donald Trump said he wanted Republicans in Congress to load his legislative agenda into “one big, beautiful bill.” They heeded his call—and the result is truly ugly. As I write, House Republicans are trying to ram through a budget reconciliation bill that cuts basic needs for children, seniors, veterans and low- and moderate-income Americans to fund big tax breaks for the wealthy. This bill is anything but beautiful. It’s a betrayal of the American people that must not be passed into law.

Democrats are warning that the changes the House bill makes to Medicaid would deprive people of lifesaving benefits. That’s why many people, including disability rights protesters in wheelchairs, have come to Capitol Hill to urge lawmakers not to cut health programs that help so many Americans just to finance tax cuts for the wealthy few. They found an unlikely ally in Republican Sen. Josh Hawley, who said cutting the health program for the poor is “morally wrong and politically suicidal.”

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the House budget bill would result in at least [13.7 million](#) Americans losing health coverage. Medicaid provides access to healthcare for people with disabilities, retirees, 40 percent of new babies, nearly 1.6 million veterans, more than 2 million military-attached children, low-wage workers and millions of people on Medicare who get supplemental Medicaid. Medicaid is essential to paying for long-term care for many older Americans, including in nursing homes. Cuts to Medicaid will force many rural hospitals to close. Work reporting requirements—often affected by fluctuating shifts and paperwork errors—will lead to more people who are eligible for Medicaid getting kicked off their healthcare for no good reason. A Center for American Progress analysis found that these requirements would lead to 15,400 avoidable deaths each year due to coverage losses.

Then there are the cuts to food assistance. The Republican bill cuts nearly \$300 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, our nation’s most effective tool to combat hunger. With high grocery prices and the Trump administration’s \$1 billion in cuts to aid to anti-hunger groups, cuts to SNAP benefits will cause even more children, seniors, veterans and people with disabilities in every community to go hungry.

The bill also would slash \$330 billion in college affordability. It would increase costs for students and their families and, by design, leave 5 million students without enough financial aid to afford college. Proposed changes to Pell grants—the cornerstone of need-based federal student aid—could mean nearly 2 out of 3 recipients could lose some or all their federal grant aid, forcing them to assume an additional total of \$7,400 for a bachelor’s degree and \$3,700 for an associate degree. And the bill could take away the most affordable options for income-driven repayment plans that 12.5 million borrowers currently use, tripling monthly payments for most of these borrowers.

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The bill’s tax provisions are skewed to help the rich get richer. The wealthiest 1 percent would save an estimated \$65,000 annually. At the other end of the spectrum, educators can deduct no more than \$300 for items they purchase for their students and classrooms—a fraction of what most teachers spend.

While Trump has slashed funding for the Education Department and proposed additional

cuts to programs for low-income children, House Republicans included a \$20 billion school voucher program in the bill. The Educational Choice for Children Act is a tax shelter that would divert crucial funds away from students in public schools to pay for private school tuition, home-schooling materials and for-profit virtual learning. It’s not “educational choice” when you defund the public schools to make them less attractive. Nor is it about raising achievement or helping needy students. Vouchers have caused some of the largest achievement drops ever recorded, and most vouchers go to families whose children already attend private schools.

Let’s be clear: The “big, beautiful bill” would make millions of Americans sicker and poorer. And no one will suffer more from these cuts than America’s children. Less school support means more kids fall behind. Less food assistance for families means more kids go hungry. Less housing assistance means more families get evicted, leaving more children unhoused. And for what? To give tax cuts to wealthy Americans.

With American families stressed and so much economic uncertainty, lawmakers should be shoring up the safety net and expanding economic opportunity. How they vote on this bill will determine whether hospitals will be forced to close, whether our parents and grandparents will lose funding for lifesaving care, and whether students in public schools will lose the resources and services they need. That’s not what Americans want. And that’s why we are fighting it.



Weingarten with Rep. Hakeem Jeffries and Sen. Cory Booker at a sit-in against cuts to Medicaid, Social Security and other vital safety net programs on April 28 at the U.S. Capitol.

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