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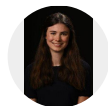


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State Attorney General William Tong, U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney (D-2nd District), discuss new Medicaid work requirements at the Edward & Mary Lord Family Health Center in Norwich on Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026. (Alison Cross / The Day)

'People will die because of this': health care advocates discuss new federal work requirements for Medicaid

37



By Alison Cross Day Staff Writer

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Nonprofit leaders and disability rights advocates in eastern Connecticut are warning state and federal officials of the life-and-death implications of looming federal work requirements for Medicaid patients.

Under the changes, which will take effect on Jan. 1, 2027, HUSKY D recipients must document at least 80 hours of work, education and job training or community service each month to maintain their coverage.

Other HUSKY D patients — including individuals with disabilities, blindness and other serious disorders — who qualify for an exemption under a “medical frailty” provision could lose their coverage if they fail to prove that their medical condition excludes them from the work requirements.

This scares health care advocates like Kristen Daniels.

“There’s just no doubt that eventually people will die because of this legislation,” Daniels said at a recent roundtable at with U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, state Attorney General William Tong, state Department of Social Services Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves, and regional stakeholders in Norwich.

Daniels, who lives with Type 1 Diabetes and is the federal co-lead for the nonprofit

T1International, said that she has received thousands of comments on social media expressing “sheer confusion ... and despair” about the new work requirements under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, also known as H.R. 1.

“It’s a really scary time to be living with a disability,” Daniels said. “Insurance is just honestly the difference between life and death. I’ve been uninsured, I’ve had to ration my insulin, and I know people’s families who have lost their children due to insulin rationing.”

“There’s so many people that are stuck in this emergency situation where we don’t have time to worry about the paperwork of enrollment into insurance,” Daniels added. “And at a certain point, the barriers are going to become too much where people just don’t seek it anymore. ... They’re going to end up in the ER if they’re lucky. I know many people who didn’t make it that far.”

Laura Gregory, an advocate for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, said that she has more than 20 doctors who manage her care.

“My day is navigating the healthcare system,” Gregory said. “I’m a little more savvy, and I have a great support system that helps me through the challenges. ... (For others) it’s challenging. They don’t have the support system or the aptitude or the knowledge about how to navigate the healthcare system.”

Jennifer Granger, the president and CEO of United Community & Family Services, said that roughly 100,000 HUSKY D recipients are at risk of losing coverage next year. At UCFS, she said that the patients most at risk include older individuals with hypertension, diabetes, chronic respiratory illness and heart disease.

She explained that part of the challenge is that patients seeking reprieve from the work requirements under the medical frailty exemption will need to continuously reapply for the exemption.

“It’s not just a one-and-done. It’s every 6 months they have to redetermine and prove once again that they are still unable to work,” Granger said. “The burden of redetermination is another tactic to try to remove people from the (Medicaid) rolls and limit the rolls.”

Megan Tibbetts, the director of housing for the Alliance for Living, Southeastern Connecticut’s only HIV/AIDS service organization and resource center, said that the nonprofit’s case managers and navigators are overwhelmed with paperwork requirements, which are expected to double once the work requirements take effect.

Tibbetts said the Alliance for Living has more than 200 clients in the region, many of whom struggle with chronic homelessness. She said that 72% of clients are on Medicaid, roughly 19% are on Medicare and 9% are uninsured.

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for insurance and medications.”

She said that “ultimately can turn into a public health crisis if we don’t get suppression.” Tibbetts said that the region’s HIV/AIDS rates are higher than the national average, but she warned that “without more state funds for their antiretroviral medications, those numbers are only coming up.”

“There’s so much confusion amongst the community about these changes,” Tibbetts said.

Reeves said the state Department of Social Services is working to inform the public about the changes through website updates and outreach for residents.

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“I have so many people that say, I'm not on Medicaid not true,” Reeves said. “We are very concerned about actually be able to navigate or not navigate enrollment



searches so they can get their chemo and medication. ... It's just unimaginable,” Courtney said. “Hopefully, we're going to see a change, hopefully in courts, and eventually in Congress, that is going to reverse this move that is just taking our country backwards, not forwards.”

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Ann Stewart

10/20/2026 11:01 PM

Death camp is that next ? This is the most callous idea ever.

David A Mitchell

10/20/2026 8:22 PM

Mr. Golden, Please explain how I have proved your point". As for your statement that

you have no loyalty to Trump, please share a criticism other than you are upset about his elimination of the penny. Let's take a look at just a few of your most recent lies. "All CT students get free breakfast, lunch and dinner." " All Epstein files have been released " (about 60% have been released). " ID needs to be shown to return cans and bottles." There are lots more but let's start the discussion on these topics. Looking forward to it.

Lucira Jane Nebelung

10/20/2026 7:14 PM

All we need to know about DJT/MAGA/GOP: They actively work to conserve wealth and power for the few at the expense of the many who are literally expendable and so derive pleasure/thrill from watching their actions impose struggle and suffering that proves their "power". Sick.

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