

HEALTH CARE ADVOCACY RESOURCE

Statement from the Kent Street Coalition Health Care Working Group:

As health care professionals and as consumers of health care, our experience shows us that health care in New Hampshire is in crisis. Soaring costs for health insurance, inflated prices for hospital care and higher out-of-pocket charges for primary and specialist care stress every NH resident. Many of our current state government's health policies are misguided and fiscally irresponsible and put the health of Granite Staters in jeopardy. This fact sheet explains many of our concerns.

VACCINES

Vaccines are safe and effective, yet too many Republican legislators act as though this is not true. They seem to have forgotten what life was like without vaccines-when childhood deaths were a common occurrence, and not a rare tragedy. The actions of these Republican lawmakers are based on extreme political ideology, not on scientific or medical facts and expertise. We see this issue as non-partisan, and view politically motivated anti-vaccine disinformation as a major threat to our public health.

NH Republican lawmakers introduced 6 bills in 2026 based on unscientific, anti-vaccine ideology. The most radical of these bills, HB 1811 tried to get rid of all NH requirements for childhood vaccines increasing the danger of outbreaks such as Measles which is occurring in several states.

CARE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

Too many people in NH go without the medicines and health care they need because they cannot afford them. In our current economy, NH families have to carefully portion out their household budget to cover essentials such as food, shelter, transportation, utilities, taxes and health costs. When people cannot afford health care or health insurance, they often delay seeing a doctor until they are quite sick. (A survey of 1,300 NH adults in 2024 found that 2 out of 3 respondents reported delaying or going without health care during the prior 12 months due to cost). Then, they are forced to seek care in a hospital emergency department rather than from their own provider, leading to long waits for everyone. Many end up needing admission to the hospital, resulting in huge medical bills and likely large medical debt. This increase in uncompensated care leads hospitals to increase their prices and insurers to charge higher premiums to cover the higher costs. Most importantly, lack of health care access leads to worse health outcomes for individuals and a decline in our state's overall health.

The partisan state budget that NH Legislature passed in the spring of 2025 with overwhelming support from GOP members and signed by Governor Ayotte made several funding cuts that rendered health care less affordable and less accessible to thousands of Granite Staters. The funding cuts include

- \$51 million for the Department of Health and Human Services,
- \$3.1 million for the ten Community Mental health Centers,

- \$2.9 million for child and family support funds,
- \$1.6 million for maternal and child health programs, and
- \$2.1 million for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps) and WIC (nutrition assistance for Pregnant Women, Infants and Children).

And, the budget imposed a monthly premium charge on some Medicaid-covered children and adults, a population that can ill afford higher costs. **These cuts in our state's health funding were exacerbated by the nearly \$1 trillion dollar cuts in federal Medicaid funding signed into law by president Trump on July 4, 2025.**

Large cuts to Medicaid lead to decreased resources for hospitals and Community Health Centers. Strained rural hospitals and those serving more Medicaid patients and uninsured will be at risk of closure and significant cuts in staff and services.

This in turn will cause:

- longer waits in Emergency Rooms
- longer delays for medical appointments
- decreased primary care and specialty services available in many communities and
- an increase in charges to patients.

MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Mental health conditions touch nearly every family in the Granite State. Effective treatment saves lives, reduces costs and promotes people's independence. These essential services are far too expensive and often unavailable to many Granite Staters. There continues to be discrimination against those with mental health conditions.

There is a lack of parity between how urgently and thoroughly a physical and a mental health emergency are treated: Insufficient progress has been made in reducing the number of persons in a mental health crisis who are forced to wait untreated in a community hospital emergency department for several days waiting for an in-patient psychiatric hospital admission in order to begin necessary treatment.

Other bottlenecks in mental health care include:

- a lack of community providers available to provide in-person mental health care,
- poor availability of transitional housing to help those discharged from the state hospital or an in-patient substance misuse facility,
- ongoing inadequate coverage by commercial insurers for support services essential for children dealing with a serious mental health condition.

Most Granite Staters with relatively limited household income receive their mental health care through the state's ten Community Mental Health Centers. **Because our GOP- lead state government has not increased the Medicaid reimbursement for**

mental health care, N.H. Medicaid does not cover the full cost of the care the centers provide. This uncompensated care in turn has led to lower salaries, cutbacks in services, and the inability to hire new providers despite the ten centers having 300 unfilled direct care positions.

FOOD

Nutrition is fundamental to health. Food insecurity is associated with obesity, poor school attendance and performance, and the forgoing of healthcare. Policies which cut assistance programs such as SNAP (“food stamps”) cause hunger and worsening health outcomes. Local food pantries are unable to make up for the loss of SNAP benefits. Food insecurity is most prevalent in the rural areas of our state where there are a higher concentration of low-income families and less access to charity-based food pantries.

The budget cuts by the GOP in Kelly Ayotte’s current state budget have contributed to a 3% decrease in the number of Granite Staters receiving SNAP benefits from June 2025 to June 2026. NH has one of the lowest percentages of SNAP eligible people enrolled in this health promoting program. Among those receiving less or no food assistance in NH are lower income working individuals and 1000 legal immigrants. In addition, many Republican legislators attempted to pass a bill (HB 1797) promoting deeper and more damaging cuts to SNAP.

Recommended sources for the above issues:

Medicaid Matters-A coalition of over 80 advocacy groups that examines the impact of Federal and State policies and funding cuts on Medicaid enrollees, people insured by the ACA and the overall health of our state.

New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute-A nonpartisan independent research non-profit that examines issues related to the NH State Budget, the economy and the financial security of Granite Staters.

NAMI-NH-The state chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness is a grassroots organization working to improve the quality of life for all by providing support, education and advocacy for people affected by mental illness and suicide

NH Hunger Solutions-A nonprofit that advocates to end food insecurity, improve equitable access to nutritious food and address hunger’s root causes for all NH residents.

The NH Liberty Alliance-This organization of NH legislators, made up primarily of free staters and libertarians including most of the Legislature’s GOP leadership, is devoted to strengthening the liberty rights of the individual while minimizing a citizen’s responsibilities to the common good.

KFF-A national independent source for health policy research, polling and news

Local press including NH Bulletin, In Depth NH, local newspapers and NHPR

Recommended Advocacy work heading into the midterms:

1. Participate in the KSC letters to the editor project citing the above material
2. Join post card writing and leaflet distribution projects sponsored by KSC in districts currently represented by legislators who are highly rated by the Liberty Alliance score card
3. Discuss your concerns about the cuts to Medicaid and SNAP, as well as the high out of pocket expenses with providers and staff when you go to the doctor. Concerns of the middle class stemming from injurious policies towards Medicaid enrollees can be very powerful in moving undecided voters.
4. Share some of the above on your personal social media so that people who trust you will take the above injustices to heart

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