



# Penncridge Pediatric Associates

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To The Editor:

As a pediatrician in the Philadelphia area, I treat many children enrolled in the Medical Assistance (Medicaid) program, which is essentially the healthcare "safety net" that we hear and read about so much as experts debate healthcare reform.

• *Pediatrics*

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The Medicaid program is a taxpayer-funded insurance for our fellow citizens who cannot afford to purchase insurance. Many of these needy people are also chronically ill, so they face many challenges. And since Medicaid is a taxpayer program, we all have a financial stake in making sure the program is managed efficiently.

Unfortunately, the state Department of Public Welfare (DPW) is pursuing a major change to the Medicaid program which would jeopardize the level of care recipients now receive while making the system far more inefficient.

The department wants to carve out the delivery of pharmacy services from those Medicaid recipients enrolled in managed care plans. DPW apparently believes that by expanding the state bureaucracy and by serving as the manager of pharmacy services for up to one million Pennsylvanians, they can provide higher care at a cheaper price. This makes no sense.

Under the current managed care system, Medicaid recipients receive all of their care in an integrated fashion: primary care physician visits, specialty care, and pharmacy. I know that when I treat a patient, I will be fully aware of all their needs and challenges. I know that when I prescribe a drug, their care manager knows it and can share this information on a real time basis with specialists or others treating my patient.

As a doctor, I can tell you that this high level of integrated care is absolutely vital for this population. Again, these are needy children and adult men and women many of whom are chronically ill. A pharmacy carve out is not a sound healthcare policy.

I am not a financial expert, but I fail to see how this policy makes financial sense either.. given the number of people that DPW will have to hire just to field the volume of phone calls from patients.

I am proud of my service to this needy population. The managed care network that I work with continues to grow and the healthcare delivered continues to improve. Pennsylvania should focus its energies on expanding a managed care system that works.

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