



## **The Disaster Relief Medicaid Act**

### **Why do we need the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act?**

Whether it is a hurricane, wildfire, flood or blizzard, natural disasters are occurring at increased rates across the country. In the aftermath of these disasters thousands of people are often forced to abandon their homes and relocate, with no idea how long it will be before they can return. After Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana in 2006, over one million evacuees were forced to relocate, with many being sent to Texas, Arkansas and parts of Mississippi, and as far away as California and Massachusetts. In another disaster, a full year after Super Storm Sandy hit the east coast, over 20,000 households remained displaced.

The stresses of being forced to move after a disaster are even greater for individuals and families that are eligible for Medicaid health care and long-term services and supports. The move from one's home state to a host state as a result of a disaster can mean the loss of access to long-time services and supports. Medicaid, the program most likely to provide these services and support, is partially funded by the federal government and administered by the states and, as a result, a person must be a resident of the state to receive Medicaid services. Individuals receiving Medicaid home and community-based services do so through a waiver that each state applies for through the federal government and many states have waiting lists for individuals with disabilities and older adults that do not carry over when an individual is forced to relocate. The loss of health care and long-term services and supports can have a significant effect on quality of life, the ability to care for one's self, the opportunity to work and much more.

### **What will the Disaster Relief Medicaid Act do?**

The Disaster Relief Medicaid Act would ensure that individuals eligible for Medicaid who are forced to relocate due to a disaster are able to continue to access their Medicaid supported services. The bill would provide states with resources to support the Medicaid needs of individuals forced to relocate following a disaster. This legislation would designate an individual who resides in an area covered under a presidential disaster declaration as a Relief-Eligible Survivor, and allow them to continue to access their Medicaid services if they are forced to relocate to another state as a result of the disaster.

The Disaster Relief Medicaid Act helps states meet the needs of Relief-Eligible Survivors through a limited time one hundred percent federal match for displaced individuals, technical assistance and support to develop innovative state strategies to respond to an influx of out-of-state individuals. The bill also creates a grant to help states develop an emergency response corps to provide home and community-based services. The legislation also guarantees that a 100 percent federal matching payment for medical assistance is provided to states in disaster areas.

**For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Josh Dubensky at [josh\\_dubensky@aging.senate.gov](mailto:josh_dubensky@aging.senate.gov), or Michael Gamel-McCormick at [michael\\_gamel-mccormick@aging.senate.gov](mailto:michael_gamel-mccormick@aging.senate.gov).**