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House of Representatives

MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Crystal Quade

Minority Caucus Floor Leader
District 132

July 18, 2019

Mr. Speaker,

Yesterday afternoon I received the MO Medicaid caseload report for June 2019, which shows that another 11,500 individuals, including more than 9,000 children, have had their state healthcare rescinded. This brings the total number of people who have been removed from the state's rolls since January 2018 to approximately 120,000. 79 percent of these, roughly 95,000, are children.

The decline stems from issues with the re-enrollment process, and is not simply the byproduct of an improving economy. Were that true, we would see a similar magnitude of decreases in the number of individuals receiving food stamps and TANF, and significant increases in Missourians' personal income. However, in June 2019 less than 500 individuals lost food stamps and the number of children receiving TANF increased. Further, Missourians' personal income growth rate has lagged behind the national average.

I know from my meetings with the Director of MO HealthNet Division (MHD) and conversations with those helping individuals appeal their removals that the government is both a significant cause and exacerbator of this situation. Reenrollment issues which have been consistently reported since last fall, which remain ongoing, include:

- MHD's eligibility software is not checking for federal SNAP eligibility, though this has been a longstanding federal requirement;
- Mailed renewal notifications are not being timely distributed; and
- The wait times for call centers, to which individuals are directed should they experience any issues with re-enrollment, are prohibitive even for the most flexible of schedules to accommodate.

The scope of children affected by these issues is staggering. As parents, you and I can both appreciate how wrenching it must be for a mother or father to know their child needs medical attention and to learn they may not be able to get the care they need. It is particularly cruel that the only means of access many children have to healthcare is through a government that seems increasingly content to purge as many of them from the system as possible.

This decline is not slowing down: currently it is more than double the national average. We need answers, and we need action. I am requesting that you charge the Special Committee on Government Oversight (SCOGO) with immediately beginning proceedings to investigate the causes of this situation and help develop solutions. Should you feel that this situation does not fit SCOGO's charge there are a number of other committees which are also appropriate fits to consider this matter. These committees

could include: the Standing Committee on Children and Families, the Standing Committee on Health and Mental Health Policy, or a newly-created special interim committee.

The House of Representatives has more than enough resources and reasons to begin proceedings. We have no excuses not to, and at this point a failure to address this problem constitutes both a moral and procedural abdication of our oversight duties. I respectfully request you make and communicate your decision to me on how you will proceed on addressing this issue by next Wednesday, July 24, 2019.

I look forward to our continued communication on this issue, and am hopeful that we can work together to put Missourians first.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Crystal Quade", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rep. Crystal Quade, 132nd District
House Minority Leader