



Stop the Block! Tell the Federal Government to Dump the TennCare Block Grant.

The TennCare Block Grant is a grave threat to Medicaid, America's health care safety net.

TennCare is Tennessee's version of Medicaid, the health care safety net for 75 million Americans. TennCare operates under a federal agreement known as a "waiver." In the waning days of the Trump administration, and without giving the public a chance to comment, the federal government allowed the state to make sweeping changes to TennCare. The new waiver is called "TennCare III," and it locks in the block grant for the next ten years. The waiver hurts vulnerable Tennesseans and establishes a dangerous precedent that threatens the future of Medicaid.

In response to a lawsuit challenging the waiver, the [federal government is now seeking public comment on the Block Grant \(TennCare III\) until September 9, 2021](#). The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will review the comments and decide whether to re-approve the Block Grant or make needed changes.

So, what's so bad about the Block Grant?

- Medicaid has been a reliable safety net for hundreds of millions of Americans because federal payments increase as needed to meet ever-increasing health care costs. The Block Grant radically changes that. It caps future federal contributions to TennCare's costs, creating a modified "block grant" that will no longer keep up with rising costs. The waiver also encourages Tennessee – [a state with disturbing track record](#) -- to cut patient care by allowing the state to divert federal Medicaid funding to other uses. [These financial changes undermine TennCare and create a dangerous precedent that threatens](#) Medicaid across the country.
- The waiver lets Tennessee refuse to cover eligible adults' medical debts incurred during the months immediately before their enrollment in Medicaid. TennCare III provides retroactive coverage only for mothers and children, leaving families with medical debt, and health care providers unpaid.
- The waiver forces children with special health care needs to get their care through commercial managed care organizations (MCOs). [MCOs fail to adequately care for these children](#), and instead use red tape to deny them access to the specialists and complex care they need.
- TennCare III allows the state to cut access to essential prescription drugs.
- The Block Grant endangers people with serious illness and disabilities, by encouraging the state to cut access to the most costly care, which is the very care required for the sickest patients.
- The Block Grant will widen gaps in health access – between [white and Black, urban and rural](#).

Be a health justice champion! Submit a comment. It's easy, it's fast, and it matters!

The comment period offers everyone who cares about justice and equity in our health care system a chance to oppose TennCare III. CMS must consider all public comments, which will form a record that CMS and the courts will rely upon to decide the fate of the Block Grant. It only takes a few minutes to submit a comment that will help protect vulnerable Tennesseans – and America's health care safety net.

To submit your comment, go to the <https://bit.ly/blockgrantcomment>.

If you would like support in drafting your comment, please contact Kinika Young at kyoung@tnjustice.org or 615-846-4709.

Last updated: 8/18/2021