



Communication**FIRST**

Because communication is a human right.

“We Take Care of Our Own:” Protecting Medicaid



[Image: Bob Williams wears a plaid cap and glasses. He sits in a powerchair with a microphone near his speech-generating device. Behind him is the US Capitol building. Image credit: Alison Chandra.]

During the last week of July 2025, [Caring Across Generations](#), CommunicationFIRST, and other partners held a [60-Hour Protect Medicaid Vigil](#). This vigil showed Congress the huge importance of Medicaid to many constituents with disabilities and their allies. During the vigil, CommunicationFIRST’s Co-Founder [Bob Williams](#) gave the following personal remarks.

BOB WILLIAMS: Good morning!

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From my heart, it is truly an honor to speak to you all, and I want to thank you all for teaching the nation a lesson in democracy. Because as Springsteen belts out, “We take care of our own.” Say it with me.

We take care of our own.

Yes, we do. I love you all. Please lend me your personal assistance, and give yourself a very loud and proud hand.

Being with you feels a lot like home. In the faces of the kids, I see myself, as well as those I grew up with and many others I have known, loved, marched with, and helped free from [senseless institutionalization](#), [exclusion](#), and [enforced silence](#). I see my older brothers and sisters and our late dad and mom, Bill and Bee Williams, who lost their parents during the Great Depression. They loved and taught all five of us. Each of us had much to say, many people to come to know, to love, and be loved by, as well as much to contribute to our family, our community, and our nation. So, if I rant on too long, just blame my parents.

I want to be clear. I am not being paid to deliver the following remarks. I have written them in full, and I am damn proud to exercise my [full First Amendment rights](#) by being here, and presenting them to you.

You know, I have lived and worked in DC since I came here in 1978. At this moment, 35 years ago, I was on my way to the White House, along with hundreds of people with disabilities and our allies, to witness the first President Bush sign the ADA into law.

Many think the ADA happened by immaculate conception. No. It was won by struggle and hard work by coalitions of disability, civil rights, women’s, LGBT, labor, and religious organizations set on **making our country far greater and equitable**. Coalitions like the ones popping up everywhere.

Earlier, in 1981, I was an intern for Senator Lowell Weicker when another administration and Congress first tried to use the reconciliation process to gut Medicaid, slash vital needs benefits like food stamps, block-grant everything in sight, and eviscerate our country’s civil rights laws, **just like today**.



We did not avert all the harm they did. But we blunted it by **making common cause with men and women from all across the political spectrum**. Doing that today might not be possible. But we had to try. Furthermore, we must continue to do the same now with members of Congress, governors, and state legislators. We must win as many hearts and minds of those still not too arrogant to lend them. You know this entire stinking mess has now landed on the laps of state and local elected officials. And we must rescue them by demanding to know and see what they will immediately do to make Congress repeal this stinking, immoral, piece of... Piece of... What can I say, with kids here? Oh yes, legislation.

...Well before next July 26th. And, if Congress refuses to end the harm it created, every governor and state legislature must act and right it and be held accountable. **No one gets to mock, patronize, and destroy us. No one.**

We do not want any more false promises, nor, their [self-serving pity](#). And we will certainly not allow them to claim they are absolutely powerless to stop and reverse the harmful and, yes, deadly consequences of this billionaires and bullies relief act. To paraphrase [FDR](#), **we the people must [demand bold, equitable action now](#)**.

Over time, we have learned that just restoring funding and laws is never enough. Especially at times like this, we must leverage the hubris of those FDR called, “the money changers.” **We the people have the opportunity and the obligation to build back better, mobilize our grassroots, reenvision what is just and possible**. This is what propelled us to write and pass the ADA; to increase the availability and quality of HCBS services; bolster the wages, skills, and dignity of direct support professionals; and more. Crisis creates opportunities, and we must make the most of it.

Most see Medicaid and Medicare as solely health financing programs. Truly, they are [much more](#).

Both were created at the apex of the civil rights movement, to **cut the cancer of racial segregation, disparity, and poverty out of health care**. Today, Medicaid and Medicare are also vital tools for **eradicating the unjustifiable institutionalization, extreme isolation, and violence against persons with disabilities of every generation, race, nationality, language, identity, and culture**. Progress continues to be made. And [far more](#) is within our power to make.



We are here today, and everyday, to halt the immoral destruction of Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, and other life-enabling services and supports, and the lives and futures of millions of people and families. We are here to demand that their full funding be restored, not wasted on billionaires and bullies. And we are here to demand these critical supports be aligned with 21st-century realities.

When Medicaid and Medicare were created in 1965, it was decided both could pay to assist people with disabilities who need help with certain activities of daily living (ADLs), like moving about, eating, bathing, toileting, grooming, and dressing. The concepts of ADLs and instrumental ADLs are antiquated. Much is left off the list. Most glaringly, what is left off is any mention or recognition of **the most quintessentially human activity of all of our lives: expressing ourselves and being understood.** Both of these programs pay for some services and devices for [people like me](#), who cannot rely on oral or sign language to be understood. But this only occurs for some people, some of the time, in some states. And when such services and tools are provided, it is often done in a begrudging, “too little, too late,” manner, as if we are frauds abusing and wasting money, which some claim belong to the DOGE Squad. Due to all this, [many](#) are exiled, **branded by some to be vacuous lost souls, [kept illiterate](#) and silenced throughout life.** And given the massive cuts, **more will be.** Freedom of expression must be made indivisible. You and I must seize this moment to make it so. Free our people now! **Say it, and make it happen with me.**

Free our people now!

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