



# **Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.**

## **The Parent Training and Information Center for the District of Columbia**

### **Testimony of Daniela Gonzales-Rious Health Justice Coordinator Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.**

A Public Roundtable of the Committee on Health on  
the Changes to the District's Medicaid and Alliance Programs

December 3, 2025

Good morning, Chairperson Henderson and members of the Committee on Health. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Council today on the changes to the District's Medicaid and Alliance Programs.

I am Daniela Gonzales-Rious, the Health Justice Coordinator at Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc. (AJE). AJE is the federally designated Parent Training and Information Center (PTI); the Family-to-Family Health Information Center for the District of Columbia; and a DC Title V implementer for DC children and youth with disabilities and special healthcare needs (CYSHCN) and their families. Each year, we assist hundreds of families through direct services, training, and advocacy in navigating the District's public education and health care systems, especially for children and youth with disabilities and special health care needs, including areas such as the special education process, school discipline, and behavioral supports.

Beyond my role in AJE, I come to you today as a former D.C. teacher, the daughter of immigrants, a proud immigrant of Peru, and a member of Keep DC Healthy. In my conversations with families, I continue to hear deep fear and uncertainty about losing access to health insurance. Too often, families are not receiving timely communication or clear guidance about what these changes mean. And even when they do receive a notice, they are left unsure of how to act on the information.

Health and political systems are already overwhelming. For example, relying on a single letter in the mail or online notice to serve as sufficient instruction for important healthcare access issues, such as recertification, is inequitable and unjust. Families need intentional outreach, responsive community engagement, focus groups, and one-to-one support to coach families through navigating these critical changes to DC public health care systems.

As I look around our city, I see the ongoing struggle immigrant and mixed-status families are facing to survive. I see people fighting every day to make ends meet, while their rights are being stripped away. We are witnessing a violent and inhumane attack on immigrant communities. Heartbreaking events, such as people being beaten and taken against their will from their homes and streets, while families are left without hearing from their loved ones, are unacceptable practices in a functioning democracy. Children are already losing parents and caregivers; we cannot compound that trauma by denying their families basic medical care.

I think about the undocumented and documented caregivers who will lose access to critical care, and the catastrophic harm that it will inflict on the mental and physical well-being of entire families. It is unreasonable to expect a caregiver to adequately care for their child, especially a child with disabilities, yet ignore their basic needs to receive quality care, like dental and vision. Additionally, families raising children with disabilities,

especially those formerly eligible for Medicaid and other public assistance programs, deserve support that strengthens them, not policies that create more barriers to their health, their stability, and their ability to care for the children who depend on them.

We must care for the people who have built, sustained, and uplifted Washington, DC. That means investing in holistic, equitable, and culturally responsive healthcare. Healthcare is a human right. Therefore, accessible, affordable, and quality care must be treated as a top priority.

Regarding the Alliance program, we stand with Keep DC Healthy and ask the DC Council to:

- Restore the income eligibility limit to 215% of the Federal Poverty Level.
- Restore all services covered by Alliance before October 1, 2025.
- Remove the age cap for adults 26 and over.
- Create a legislatively established Alliance Advisory Council with appointed members from DHCF, DHS, and the public to increase accountability and transparency regarding drastic program changes before they occur.

Regarding DC Medicaid, we stand with Keep DC Healthy and ask the DC Council to:

- Seek a [1332 waiver](#). If DC were approved, the 1332 waiver would allow residents who are no longer income-eligible for Medicaid but are also not income-eligible for the Basic Health Plan (BHP) to receive coverage from BHP.
- Commit to securing funds for dental and vision for BHP recipients.
- Create a Continuous Enrollment Period for the BHP and grace periods for renewal if coverage is lost, mirroring Medicaid's 90-day post-termination window.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.