

Potential Medicaid Cuts Put Savings of Middle-Class Elderly at Risk

The health care bill the U.S. Senate is fine-tuning could have profound effects on elderly people who rely on nursing home care, says Houston-area elder law attorney **Kelley Bentley** of **Roberts Markel Weinberg Butler Hailey PC**. Bentley is board certified in estate planning and probate law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization.

“The bill proposes large cuts to federal Medicaid support over several years with reliance on states to decide funding in the future. In Texas, nearly 70 percent of nursing home residents are enrolled in Medicaid.

“While many people may assume the program pays solely for health care for the poor, it also fills a gap for long-term care, including at-home and nursing home care for the elderly population. The cost of long-term care in the U.S. can be substantial and a serious drain on an individual’s assets. That includes middle-class retirees who sometimes have managed to save substantial assets. Some people simply outlive their savings for long-term care.

“Older people should take a hard look at their savings long before any health problems. Consider a long-term care savings plan or long-term care insurance and also talk to a lawyer about how to organize and protect assets. In Texas, long-term care Medicaid programs can provide a wide range of care, including nursing home, assisted living and at-home programs. The secret is to start to plan early, before the need arises as there are more options available for the preservation of assets. The goal is not necessarily to preserve assets for future generations, but to ensure that an

individual (or married couple) has sufficient assets to cover any future long-term care needs.”

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