More Protests as Florida Plans to End Its HIV Medicaid Contract With AHF

AIDS Healthcare Foundation will not be an option for people with HIV on Medicaid in Fort Lauderdale and Miami.

August 7, 2018 By Cameron Gorman

Led by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), over 100 HIV/AIDS activists in Florida continued to protest Governor Rick Scott's plan to terminate the state's Medicaid specialty contract with AHF in Southeast Florida, reports the News Service of Florida.

Specifically, the contract with AHF's plan, called Positive Healthcare, is to be terminated in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, considered the nation's epicenter of new HIV infections. Instead, the state will contract its HIV/AIDS care with Clear Health Alliance, an HMO owned by Simply Healthcare.

Last week, in their most recent protest, activists converged in front of the City of Orlando Hispanic Office for Local Assistance, according to an AHF press release. They chose that location to underscore that the AHF plan "provides critical coverage to Puerto Ricans and other vulnerable populations living with HIV/AIDS."

The plan has been available since 1999, and, according to the release, provides coverage for over 2,000 people in the state living with HIV/AIDS.

Rick Scott threatens to disrupt the care of thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS at a time when #Florida continues to pull back on other resources devoted to combating this problem. We are protesting #RickScott over his decision along and state Medicaid officials to deny the continuation of health care coverage to over 2,000 patients living with HIV, provided by Positive Healthcare (PHC) #AHF #HIV #AIDS

A post shared by The AIDS Healthcare Foundation (@ahfsouth) on Aug 2, 2018 at 12:16pm PDT

A decision in April by Florida Medicaid officials awarded Medicaid contracts to five for-profit managed care plans, excluding Positive Healthcare.

“Rick Scott has not been transparent with the Puerto Rican community or anyone that he was elected to serve, on what he is doing to address this epidemic that has exploded under his watch,” Michael Kahane, AHF Southern bureau chief, said in the press release. “If he truly cares about the Puerto Rican community or anyone dealing with health care challenges, we implore him to put people over politics and let Puerto Ricans and all people choose who to provide their health care, as one choice is no choice.”

Hispanics and Latinos represent only 18 percent of the total United States population but “account for about one quarter of all new diagnoses of HIV” in the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

BREAKING NEWS - We’re suing @FLGovScott for denying our public records request! The state’s contract w/ us, a NON-PROFIT, is ending. 2,000 HIV+ Floridians will have disrupted care. FOR PROFIT company “Clear Health Alliance” got the state’s new contract. https://t.co/hypbgihGgJ pic.twitter.com/VKPZsJwApH

— AIDS Healthcare (@AIDSHealthcare) July 26, 2018

The Scott administration fired back against accusations. In a quote to the News Service of Florida, Scott spokesman McKinley Lewis said the dispute has “nothing to do with helping patients—this is just about a private vendor being upset that the state will be contracting with someone else to do more for this vulnerable population,”

Last month, AHF activists protested the governor’s Medicaid plan by taking to the sand outside his beach house. Their posters read: “One choice is no choice.”

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/protests-continue-florida-plans-end-medicaid-contract-aids-group-video