

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

May 16, 2025

The Honorable Brandon Ler
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Matt Regier
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Ler and President Regier:

We agree Montana families should receive the health care services and supports needed to enable them to care for their children with disabilities. While my administration is steadfast in its commitment to ensuring eligible Montanans receive vital health care services through Medicaid, we must also be fiscally responsible with taxpayers' hard-earned money.

House Bill 881 proposes to expand Medicaid eligibility to children with disabilities in households earning up to 300% of the federal poverty level, the highest level allowed by federal regulations under the Family Opportunity Act. For context, a Montana family of four earning up to \$96,450 would qualify under House Bill 881.

While House Bill 881 requires the household to pay a monthly premium to "buy in" to Medicaid, the premiums collected would cover only a small portion of the actual program costs. In fact, House Bill 881 is projected to cost Montana taxpayers more than \$6.25 million over the next four years.

Existing pathways already provide Medicaid access for many children with significant disabilities. Montana's Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers, specifically the Developmental Disability Program (DDP) 0208 Waiver and the Big Sky Waiver, assess eligibility based solely on the child's income, not the family's income. This approach allows children, who might not otherwise qualify for Medicaid, to receive full Medicaid benefits and essential waiver services, such as personal care assistance, which enable them to remain at home and alleviate substantial financial burdens on their families.

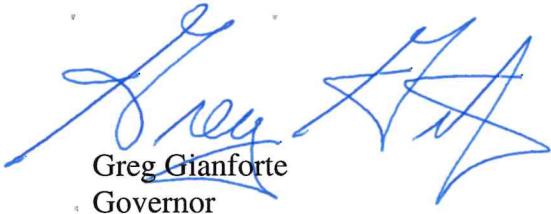
House Bill 881 would establish a new Medicaid program for higher-income households, duplicating existing avenues for the intended beneficiaries and placing an unnecessary strain on limited Medicaid program resources.

Our Montana Constitution requires us to balance our budget. In 2021 and 2023, I am proud that we worked together to deliver balanced budgets that not only were fiscally responsible, but also allowed us to seize the opportunity to let hardworking Montanans keep more of what they earn. The budget proposal I sent to the Legislature for the 2025 Legislative Session was fiscally conservative, keeping spending below inflation.

The budget and other bills with hefty price tags that the Legislature passed, however, are not fiscally responsible. Therefore, I will keenly review the budget and spending bills the Legislature passed, making some difficult decisions to protect taxpayers and their hard-earned resources. Hardworking Montanans expect us to be fiscally responsible.

Therefore, in accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto House Bill 881: "AN ACT REVISING THE MEDICAID BUY-IN PROGRAM TO INCLUDE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; EXTENDING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; AMENDING SECTIONS 53-6-113, 53-6-131, AND 53-6-195, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Legislative Services Division
Christi Jacobsen, Secretary of State