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A Testimony from a Young Man whose Future could be Decided by Medicaid

My name is Maurice Azar. I am 21 years old and have Asperger's Syndrome, an Autism Spectrum Disorder. However, my disability does not define me as a person. Thanks to the support of my family, my school, and community agencies such as St. Clair County Community Mental Health, I was successful in school, having received my High School Diploma. Using the momentum gained from my experience in High School, I attended St. Clair County Community College where I obtained an Associate Degree in General Business. Presently I am attending Walsh College where I am only two semesters away from earning my Bachelors of Business Administration with Majors in Management and Finance.

Despite my recent successes, given the current condition of the economy, I have been unable to obtain a job with a steady stream of income. Being a full-time college student with low income is not an easy feat, and this is only complicated further by more issues. I have applied for SSI and have been denied. Also, I no longer receive Medicaid since I turned 21. Without insurance, it is hard for me to afford the medications that I need. I have been prescribed anti-anxiety medications to help deal with anxiety issues I have as a symptom of Asperger's Syndrome. These medications are prescribed by my psychiatrist at St. Clair County Community Mental Health, and were previously covered by Medicaid. Without insurance, I now am forced to choose between bettering myself and being able to function in my everyday life.

Without insurance, many people across the State of Michigan, as well myself, are hindered from obtaining opportunities by which to better ourselves and, in the process, Michigan's economy. If I am able to complete my college education, I will be better able to obtain a good job. However, this will not be possible if I have to choose between medicine and education. With this in mind I have one question for everybody here, ladies and gentlemen. Do we want Michigan to be a state that embraces the growth and success of the individual, or one that suppresses the success that each person is capable of, regardless of their abilities or disabilities?