



Utahns

SPEAK UP

Because I wanted to better myself and not depend on the system it has been harder for me to make ends meet.

Garrin Tasso

Logan, UT

Garrin Tasso is 28 years old. She has a 4 year old daughter and was recently married. Currently Garrin is an office manager at a dental office. During her pregnancy and since the birth of her daughter, Garrin and her daughter relied on Medicaid to help them meet their health care needs. Now the two of them have private health insurance through her husband's employer.



Helping to meet their needs? Yes and No...

Luckily, Garrin and her daughter were fairly healthy, relying on Medicaid for routine primary and preventive care. Despite being relatively healthy, Garrin knew that going without insurance was not an option for her and her daughter. As with most children, Garrin's daughter caught all sorts of colds while in day care. Yet one illness in particular seemed to be more than just a cold. After seeing four different doctors in three months, an emergency room doctor realized that her daughter had pneumonia. Garrin feels torn because she believes the doctors did not catch her daughter's pneumonia in a timely manner because they were on Medicaid, *"In my experience, I've noticed a built in bias from health care providers against Medicaid patients. Specifically, the doctors have spent less time with me and their treatment is less effective."* At the same time, without Medicaid *"I wouldn't have been able to pay for all the care myself,"* Garrin explained.

A Catch 22...

Medicaid and other benefits helped Garrin work towards self sufficiency. However, the system unfortunately is not set up to foster success. *"As a single mom with one child, when I got my \$2.00 per hour pay raise, I seriously considered not taking the raise because it cut my benefits so drastically. I was worse off with the pay raise and no Medicaid than I was with the lower income and benefits."* For Garrin it created a catch 22. *"I almost asked for a pay decrease because my benefits were decreased so much that I couldn't afford groceries or day care. It's kind of like a cliff. Because I wanted to better myself and not depend on the system it became harder for me to make ends meet."*

Garrin and her daughter no longer rely on the state to help them, however she knows there are ways the system could be strengthened. *"I think the Medicaid program could be improved by using a sliding salary scale to qualify for benefits rather than simply cutting benefits at a specific income level."* This way, families can reach self sufficiency without the fear of losing everything.