

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Home Care Is Optional. Institutions Are Mostly Not.

Federal Medicaid law makes nursing facility care mandatory and home and community based services optional. MACPAC’s own FY 2023 figures show what that classification does, and why the same services get cut every time.

PILLAR: WHY | COMPANION TO BLOG POST B164 | 2-PAGE BRIEF

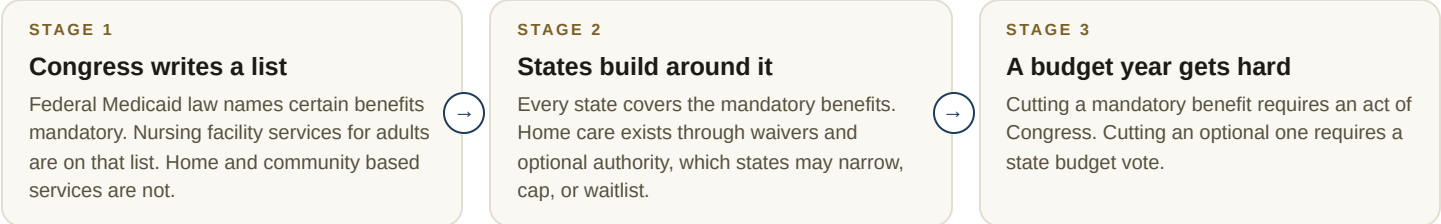
96%

OF HOME CARE IS OPTIONAL

Of non-institutional long term services and supports spending, FY 2023.

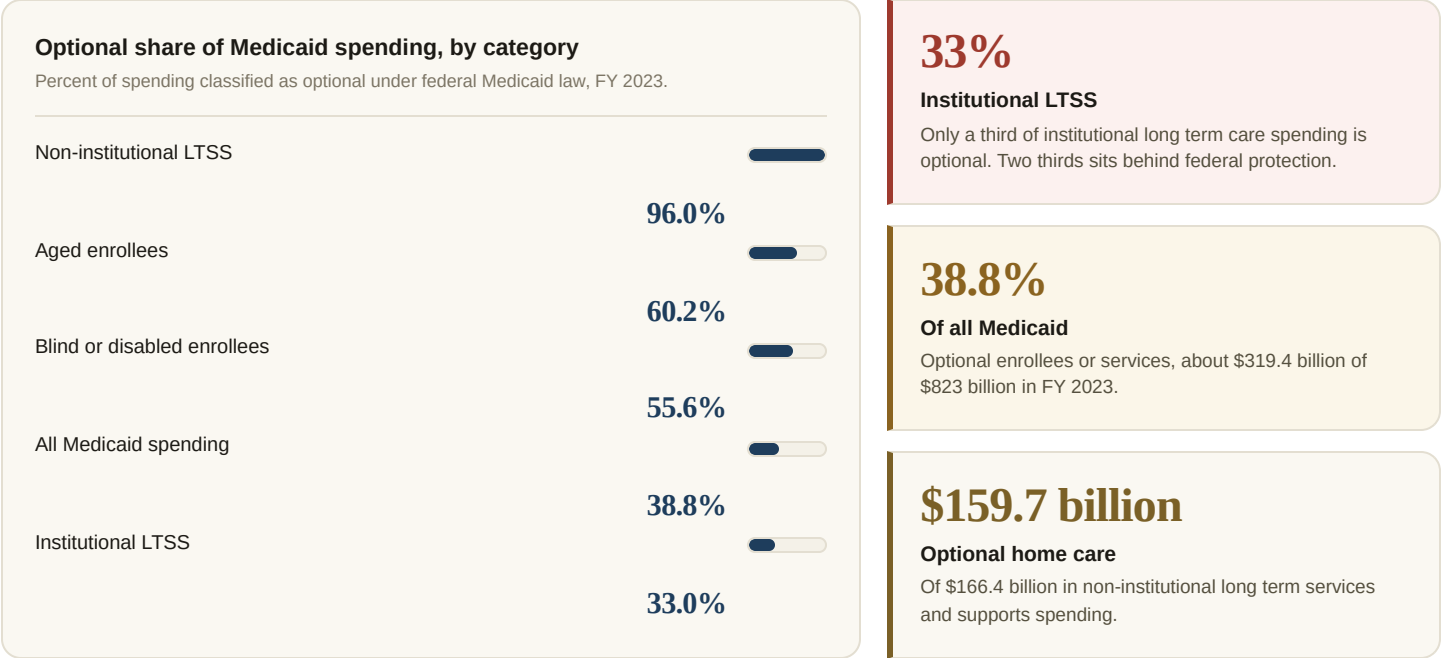
How a legal classification becomes a budget cut

LIST, BUILD, CUT



What share of spending is optional

MACPAC, FY 2023



WHAT OPTIONAL FELT LIKE FROM MY KITCHEN

“

I asked whether they could reduce the nursing home instead. She said that was not how it worked. It took me two more years to find out she was describing federal law.

REPORTED BY A MICHIGAN PARENT.

Turning the classification into an argument

CITE THE COMMISSION, NOT AN ADVOCATE

FRAME

Lead with the structure

☐ State that nursing facility care is mandatory under federal law

☐ State that home and community based services are optional

☐ Name that this is a classification, not a judgment of necessity

☐ Note that prescription drugs are optional too

☐ Make clear you are not asking for something extra

CITE

Use neutral sources

☐ MACPAC advises Congress and has no stake in the fight

☐ Use the FY 2023 figures, not older testimony

☐ 96% non-institutional against 33% institutional

☐ 38.8% of all Medicaid spending is optional

☐ Attach the source rather than paraphrasing it

COST

Make the fiscal case

☐ Ask what the state pays per person for institutional placement

☐ Ask what it pays for the waiver services avoiding it

☐ Request both figures in writing

☐ Point out that cut need reappears in mandatory spending

☐ Frame it as accounting, not ideology

CLOSE

Ask for something votable

☐ Name a line item, a rate, or an appropriation

☐ Do not ask for support in general

☐ Request a written response by a date you name

☐ Ask for a meeting and propose two dates

☐ Follow up on the date you named

BRING ONE PAGE, NOT A BINDER

The optional benefits sheet

01
Person
One paragraph on a day, and who provides the support.

02
Law
Mandatory nursing facility, optional home and community based services.

03
Numbers
96% against 33%, sourced to MACPAC, FY 2023.

04
Ask
The single line item or rate you want changed.

YOUR MOVE

When you are told the money is not there

1

Name the classification

Optional is a legal term, not a value judgment.

2

Show the split

96% of home care optional, 33% of institutional.

3

Ask for the comparison

State cost per person, both settings, in writing.

4

Make it fiscal

Cut need reappears in the mandatory column.

5

Ask for a vote

One line item, named, with a date for a reply.

You are not asking anyone to be generous. You are asking them to take the cheaper half of a choice federal law already forces the state to make.

SOURCES

Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission. Mandatory and Optional Enrollees and Services in Medicaid, presentation of March 2026, using FY 2023 data.

Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission. Mandatory and optional benefits overview, Medicaid 101.

KFF. 5 Key Facts About Medicaid Eligibility for Seniors and People with Disabilities, February 7, 2025.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Section 1915(c) home and community based services waiver authority and state waiver listings.

Social Security Act, Title XIX. Mandatory and optional benefit categories for state Medicaid programs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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