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# The Medicare For All Conversation Must Include The Disability Community

By MIA IVES-RUBLEE | 7 days ago |



Noam Galai/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

*In this op-ed, Mia Ives-Rublee, a disabled organizer who serves as the Women's March disability coordinator, explains why politicians who are pushing [Medicare for All proposals](#) need to make sure they're centering voices from the disabled community.*

"Medicare for All" has become the new buzzy slogan for progressives in 2019, and everyday Americans have latched onto the movement. Yet as the conversation around Medicare for All rages on, there are key voices missing: those of poor and disabled people.

policy. But any bill passed out of Congress should enact truly inclusive, affordable health care that will lead to universal coverage and is accessible, appropriate for, and inclusive of disabled women. In order to achieve that, politicians must work intensively with the disability community to include our voices in the conversation, ensuring that Medicare for All is truly for all.

Here's why this matters: Previous proposals for a Medicare for All policy, like the one put forward by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), have proposed getting rid of most of Medicaid, a program that 75 million poor and disabled people rely on to obtain the services they need for little or no cost. Many services covered under Medicaid — like community-based long term support services (LTSS) that help keep disabled people in their homes — aren't covered under Medicare.



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[Medicare for America](#), another plan proposed by Reps. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), would cover community-based LTSS under Medicare. However, that plan is not a true universal single-payer plan, because it allows individuals to opt out of the system if they are on another health care plan.

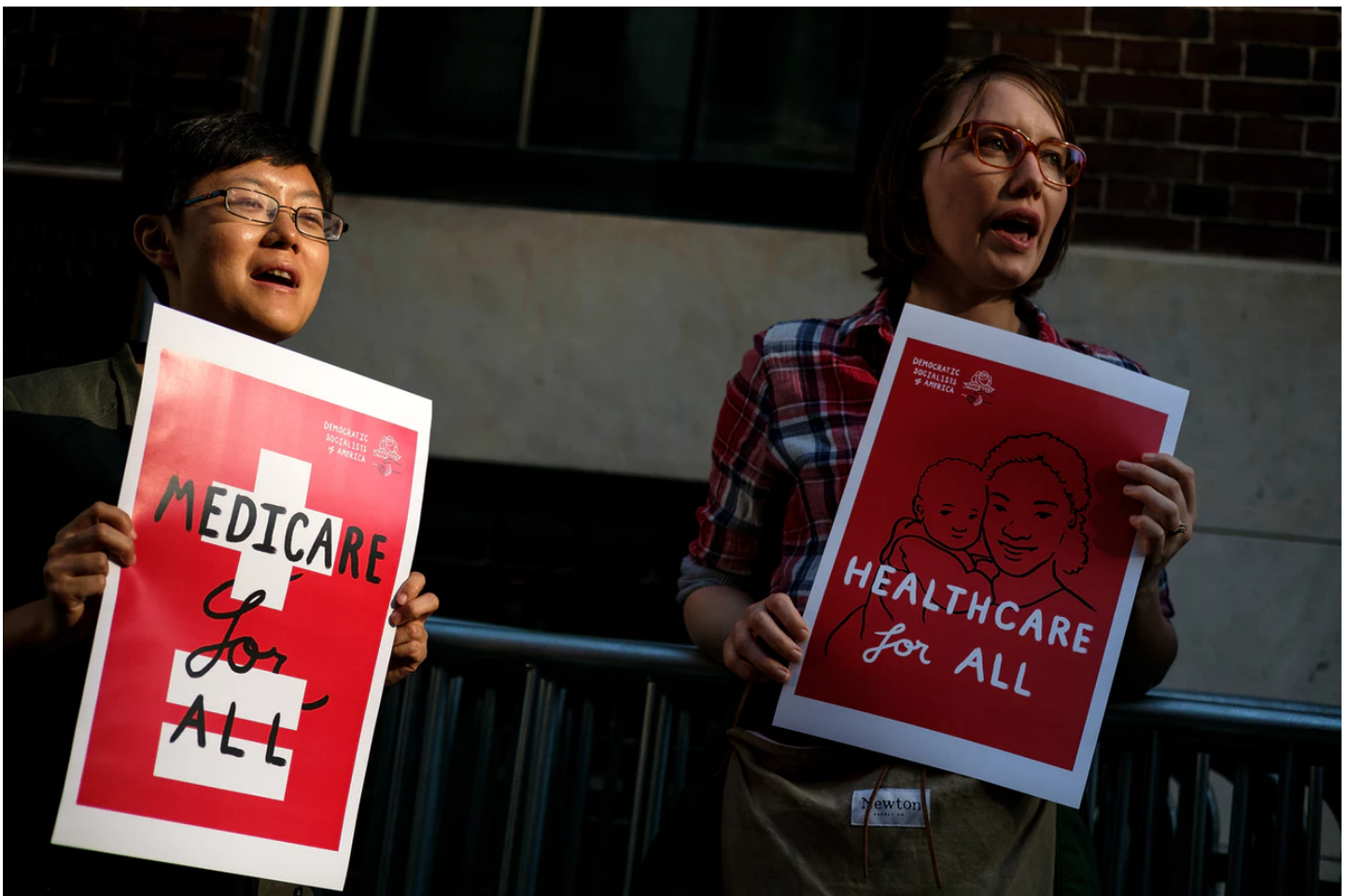
Now, Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) [has released](#) a plan that is one of the most comprehensive proposals to make its way around Congress. The plan, which was introduced Wednesday, includes provisions that would greatly expand coverage to include dental, vision, prescription drugs, reproductive health services for women, maternity and newborn care. It would also cover LTSS and include plans for folks of all ages. It's a big step in the right direction.

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If lawmakers were to accept a version of Medicare for All that doesn't cover community-based LTSS, disabled people will either be forced to buy supplemental coverage or be forced to remain on Medicaid. Disabled people — whose employment rates were at just [19.1 percent in 2018](#), according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and who make on average [63 cents](#) for every dollar non-disabled people make, according to the American Institutes for Research — can hardly afford to pay for additional coverage. Leaving poor and disabled people to rely on a separate system like Medicaid will likely result in even poorer outcomes. Continued conservative attacks have resulted in gutting Medicaid services through [block granting](#), [work requirements](#), and [drug testing](#).

will address the issues around Medicare for All. Disabled people tend to get left out of the decision-making process with many progressive policies, including those around public transportation, plastic use, and gun violence prevention.

Repeatedly, the disability community has asked to be included in discussions that affect us, but policymakers and non-disabled advocates have offered tepid support at best, often leaving disabled people out of the debate when they're not needed as poster children.



Drew Angerer/Getty Images News/Getty Images

The pursuit of a true Medicare for All program is an exciting prospect, one that could bring real change to the lives of so many. I, too, support a universal health care program. The Women's March Women's Agenda lays out a plan for creating a universal Medicare for All



community.

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Disabled people and poor people should not be bundled into a separate Medicaid plan or be required to purchase supplemental coverage in order to receive the health care they need. Progressive politicians are moving rapidly to ride the change in public will on this issue, but they must pay attention to the finer details. They will need stakeholders' knowledge to ensure the same issues that plague Medicare and Medicaid don't replicate themselves in their bold single-payer proposals. It could mean life or death for me and other members of the disability community.

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## This Is What's Missing From The Jussie Smollett Conversation Right Now

By [CLARISSA BROOKS](#) | 2 weeks ago |



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*Bustle's "What's Missing" gives space to important insights that are being left out of the conversation around the most talked about news of the day. In this op-ed, writer and community organizer Clarissa Brooks unpacks what's missing from the discussion about Jussie Smollett and racial violence.*

*Empire* actor Jussie Smollett told Chicago police in late January that he had been the victim of an attack that had all the makings of a hate crime. On Thursday, he turned himself in to police after he was charged with a felony count of disorderly conduct for allegedly filing a false police report. Since then, a common discussion point among many of us following the case has been: Do you think Jussie Smollett lied?

While that's a valid question, there are also *other* valid questions that are equally deserving of an answer: Do we trust the Chicago Police Department? Why is it so easy to believe that Smollett would make this story up? And why don't we have more empathy for black survivors of violence, especially those who are LGBTQIA+?

As Charles Preston, a community organizer and journalist in Chicago who has covered race and the Chicago Police Department, sums it up to me: "Many of our people — black people — are calling for the most corrupt and racist police force in the country to jail another black gay man ... for a falsified police report. That is what is happening."

The only people who know if Smollett's attack happened or not are Smollett and the people involved in the incident. We as the public are not able to decide and decipher what occurred. But whatever the outcome may be or how much we trust it, there *are* things that are being left out of the conversation that deserve to be talked about.

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Firstly, people aren't talking enough about the past failings of a police department that has been known to systematically oppress and abuse black folks. There were the cases of [Laquan McDonald](#) and [Rekia Boyd](#), who were both shot and killed by Chicago Police officers. In a study of the city's police department use of force incidents between 2011 and 2016, the Department of Justice found "[a pattern of civil rights violations](#)" by the Chicago Police Department. The report also noted that officers' use of unreasonable force fell "heaviest on predominantly black and Latino neighborhoods."

In a press conference about Smollett's charge, the police chief said Smollett "took advantage of the pain and anger of racism to promote his career." While the investigation is ongoing and the facts are still being uncovered, the response and immediate acceptance by many in the American public since his remarks has shown how easily they can be swayed to trust institutions that regularly kill and harm black communities.

Secondly, the conversation has completely left out the effects of not believing black people who have, in fact, been victims of violence. It is well-documented that [black women, specifically, are rarely believed](#) when they are sexually assaulted. In a 2015 case, Oklahoma prosecutors claimed [police officer Daniel Holtzclaw](#), who was convicted of raping multiple black women, specifically chose to victimize these women because they'd be less believable if they reported the assaults.

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That burden of not being believed also shows up when black men report assaults. After reports came out that Terry Crews said he had been sexually assaulted, Crews was mocked because people didn't believe he was a victim. In testimony regarding the Senate's Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights, Crews said he was told his assault was just a "joke" or "horseplay." His sexuality also became a topic of discussion. As Jay Connor wrote for HuffPost, "when we question a victim's sexual preferences after an attack, not only are we criminalizing homosexuality, but we're devaluing the severity of the actual crime."

And finally, the public seems to be forgetting the legacy of hateful violence that black queer folks *do* face on a regular basis. Hate crimes are hard to report, prosecute, and gather proper information on. The FBI reported in 2017 that racially motivated hate crimes rose 16 percent nationally, with Chicago reporting the highest hate crime rate of any other city in Illinois. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs also reported in 2017 that of the 5 percent rise in crimes against LGBTQIA+ folks that occurred that year, 60 percent of them were against black people.



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interest. Racism, homophobia, and respectability politics run our every day, and these isms are always interested in black and brown folks. We don't get a day off. Oppressive systems show up in how we navigate the world, how we are believed, and who gets to decide if we deserve justice.

Pundits who are looking to continue erasing and silencing victims of hate crimes and sexual violence will keep doing just that regardless of the results of the Smollett investigation. This case will be their fuel, but it also means those of us interested in seeing justice served will have to fight harder for survivors.

There is no shame in standing up for survivors. This case does not change the reality that systemic racism, homophobia, and patriarchy are directly and indirectly killing marginalized folks across the country. We can hold multiple truths to be possible at once. We have to show up for each other because history has shown us that no one else will.

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