

CMS TAPS ARDENT MEDICAID CRITIC AS NEW TOP MEDICAID OFFICIAL

The Trump administration recently announced a new Medicaid chief: Mary Mayhew, a former Maine health official who has criticized Medicaid expansion and sought to tighten eligibility requirements in traditional Medicaid.

She is the new deputy administrator of CMS and director of the Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services (CMCS), succeeding Brian Neale, who left that position in January.

Mayhew oversaw Maine's safety-net programs, including Medicaid, from 2010 to 2017 as the state's commissioner for health and human services under Gov. Paul LePage (R). She left that position before the state's voters approved a ballot initiative to expand Medicaid—an initiative which still has not taken effect because LePage has refused to implement it.

Mayhew has repeatedly denounced the idea of Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act. She has testified before several state legislatures, urging them not to expand Medicaid, and she wrote an op-ed in the Deseret News, a Utah newspaper,

arguing that Utah should "take lessons from Maine" and avoid expanding Medicaid. She said expansion of the program costs too much and takes resources away from the truly needy.

She also supports the Trump administration's encouragement of work requirements in Medicaid. Under her tenure, Maine submitted an 1115 waiver request seeking to add work requirements to its program.

Before serving in state government, Mayhew was a partner at a public affairs firm and was vice president of the Maine Hospital Association.

An advocate for low-income people in Maine alleged that Mayhew, in her government role, "demonized, punished and blamed" poor people. "Ultimately, since she has been commissioner, life has gotten a lot harder for a lot of Maine families," said Robyn Merrill, executive director of Maine Equal Justice Partners, which is suing the LePage administration over his refusal to implement the state's Medicaid expansion referendum.