Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

When a Fresh Start is Full of Setbacks

Bernie & John - Silver Spring, MD

That's Medicaid *shares stories of people covered by Medicaid at critical points in their lives, underscoring the importance of stable health insurance coverage in building a Culture of Health.*

Four years ago, partners **John** and **Bernie** were homeless and didn't have access to health insurance. The pair got help from Maryland non-profit, Progress Place, and it was there that caseworkers helped them enroll in Medicaid. While homeless, Bernie had his first of two heart attacks. Bernie says without Medicaid, they couldn't afford the hospital bill, medications, and follow-up appointments and treatments.

The couple eventually found housing and jobs, and both joined their employers' health insurance. But last year, John broke his femur, Bernie had his second heart attack, and both lost their jobs due to Covid. They re-enrolled in Medicaid and say without the program, they wouldn't have been able to afford medical care and rent and would have likely ended up homeless again.

They credit Medicaid for not only keeping a roof over their heads during a tough year but for saving Bernie's life. Both now have full-time jobs and will soon have access to their employers' health insurance.

"Medicaid is truly a lifesaver. When life took a turn for the worst, we still had access to treatment and care without sacrificing our livelihood. Without Medicaid, John would be at risk for homelessness, and I probably wouldn't be alive today to share our story, so thank you, Medicaid," Bernie says.