WASHINGTON, D.C. – DeKalb County Commissioner Larry Johnson, chair of the National Association of Counties’ (NACo) Health Steering Committee, led two Congressional briefings presented by the Partnership for Medicaid which offered insightful perspectives on how federal proposals to alter Medicaid would affect patients, providers, state and local governments.

“The State of Medicaid: Views from the Field and a Look at the Policy” briefings were held Friday, Sept.28 – the first on the Senate side of U.S. Capitol Hill and another later in the day on the House of Representatives’ side. [Click here to review documents available at the briefings.]

Johnson along with the other speakers offered a variety of expert perspectives on the state of the Medicaid program, including proposals in Congress to structurally alter the nature, intent, and scope of the current program and how those proposals would affect patients, service providers, and state and local governments. From the elected county official perspective, Johnson spoke about how Medicaid helps local governments serve their communities.

“County governments have historically been responsible to provide medical care for low-income residents,” Johnson said. “Across the country, counties use Medicaid to fund hospitals and clinics, provide health care and related services for patients and as a result provide good jobs in the health care sector. The bottom line is this: if Congress makes cuts to the Medicaid program it will be felt at the county government level and negatively affect millions of families.”

Johnson was joined on the panel of experts by Dr. Heidi Allen, researcher and co-investigator of the Oregon Health Study, which examined the impact of health insurance expansion on uninsured adults; Bruce Siegel, President and CEO, National Association of Public Hospitals; Dr. Janelle Goetcheus, Chief Medical Officer, Unity Health Care, Washington, D.C.; and Marty and Shannon Svikhart, parents of a 3-year-old Medicaid beneficiary and cystic fibrosis patient.

During his remarks, Johnson said counties across the country work to reduce health disparities by weaving together public federal, state and local resources with private sector.

“To reduce the prevalence of obesity, DeKalb County is supporting the DeKalb Urban Agriculture team and encouraging it to establish itself as a Food Policy Council that monitors and advises on the growth of the sustainable food system in DeKalb County,” he said.
Johnson also cited an example about how DeKalb County works to curb tobacco use.

“We partnered with Oglethorpe and Emory Universities to create and maintain tobacco-free campuses,” Johnson said. “This initiative protects more than 40,000 students, faculty, and staff members from secondhand smoke exposure.”


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The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation’s 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public’s understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit www.naco.org.