

Expanding Medicaid Would Provide Wide Ranging Benefits*

Do you wish health care could be less expensive? Are you seeing the costs associated with your health insurance increase? Do you know someone who does not have health care because they can't find affordable coverage? If you answered yes to any one of these questions now is the time to do something about it. Sign a petition to make sure that in 2020 citizens can vote for a plan that will reduce the cost of health care for all Floridians. Florida can expand the Medicaid program to provide very low-cost health care to thousands of currently uninsured. The League of Women Voters of Florida is working to get this issue on the November 2020 ballot because our legislators have not taken action.

A portion of the taxes we pay to the federal government have been reserved for Florida to pay 90% of the cost of expanding Medicaid. The expanded Medicaid program would provide health insurance to low-income adults who are not eligible for Medicaid now. Most of the people who would be newly eligible are working, some are veterans and others are not working because they have a health condition that makes it difficult to work.

The majority of Floridians (59%) already support expanding Medicaid and we have evidence to demonstrate there are good reasons to do so. States that have expanded Medicaid report better health among their citizens such as earlier diagnoses of cancer, which means more effective and cheaper treatment, more people with chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension receiving ongoing care, as well as pharmaceutical treatment for people suffering from addiction to opioids and tobacco. Also reported are better responses to heart surgery, less infant mortality and shorter hospital stays.

In addition to better health, the states that have expanded Medicaid have experienced economic benefits. They report budget savings, increased revenue and better overall economic growth. The infusion of large amounts of new federal funds (from taxes we pay) result in an increase in well paying jobs. Expansion states report a decrease in the premiums offered through the Affordable Care Act Market Place and fewer closures of rural hospitals. Workers who previously had no insurance report they find it easier to get work and those who had been working reported it was easier to remain working. Disabled people in expansion states are more likely to be working than those in non-expansion states. It has been estimated that Florida would have saved as much as 500 million state dollars in 2018 if we had accepted Medicaid expansion.

Hospitals have to accept anyone who needs care and currently many who need to be in the hospital or use the emergency room have no insurance. Because more people will be insured and contribute to the cost of running a hospital the average costs per person for hospital services will be reduced. This will lower the cost of insurance for everyone. It will also allow some rural hospitals to stay in business.

In spite of the compelling data demonstrating the benefits of expanding Medicaid the Florida legislature refuses to take action. It is time for citizens to act. Sign a petition to put Medicaid expansion on the 2020 ballot. You can find the petition and related information on the LWV of Alachua County Facebook page.

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