

R14-4 Medicaid Expansion Advocacy

Resolved, by the 108th Annual Council of the Diocese of Atlanta, meeting at the Marietta Conference Center, Marietta, Georgia, on November 7 and 8, 2014, that our Diocese respectfully request the Presiding Bishop and the Office of Government Relations lead efforts of bishops to expand Medicaid in the 24 states that have chosen not to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act; and be it further

Resolved, that this Council supports our Bishop's courageous efforts to expand Medicaid in Georgia under the Affordable Care Act and the clergy and laypeople of the Diocese of Atlanta will encourage and enhance his efforts in 2015 through intentional and specific advocacy to the Governor and the State Legislature.

EXPLANATION

The United States is undergoing a health care revolution with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Over seven million have been enrolled in Medicaid since October 2013 in the 26 states that have chosen to expand Medicaid (including Kentucky), but nearly six million Americans (including 650,000 in Georgia) are being denied access to health care coverage in 24 states because their states have chosen not to expand Medicaid. This is an immediate crisis that threatens the lives of thousands of our fellow citizens.

The Episcopal Church has very clear, strong policy regarding health care coverage for every citizen:

- Call upon the President, Congress, governors and leaders to devise universal access to health care for the nation's people. (General Convention '91)
- Assert the right of all individuals to health care and call on the President and Congress to protect the Medicare and Medicaid programs. (Executive Council 2/05)
- Urge the U.S. Congress to pass, and the U.S. President to sign into law, legislation guaranteeing adequate insurance and health care for every U.S. citizen by the end of 2009. (General Convention '09)
- Call on The Episcopal Church to advocate for access to adequate medical care regardless of any factor other than the need for health care. (General Convention '09)

Although we recognize that the Office of Government Relations usually focuses on national government operations, we believe that the special national/state partnership of the Medicaid program itself offers a special opportunity for national/state partnership in

The Episcopal Church to address this crisis. Thousands of lives are at stake. The expertise of the national office can be helpful to the bishops by framing consistent communication with the media and giving guidance on collaborations with other faith organizations.

Bishop Wright demonstrated outstanding leadership with his advocacy efforts to persuade the Governor to expand Medicaid in Georgia this year. We want to encourage and enhance his efforts in 2015 with a sense of urgency. It may take stories of actual victims of the present policy to move the public and the politicians. (The polls reported by The Atlanta Journal Constitution show 55-60 percent of Georgians support Medicaid expansion.) Community-based organizations are in a position to be aware of young mothers dying with cancer or young fathers dying with heart disease because they did not have Medicaid. The best public health estimates are that 300 poor Georgians are dying early, preventable deaths each month because they do not have access to a doctor – 3,000 lives lost in the first ten months of this year! Dying silently in the shadows. We must bring these stories into the light. For some key facts and important references, see the attached flyer.

We encourage Bishop Wright to consider issuing a Joint Statement Supporting Medicaid Expansion in Georgia with Diocese of Georgia Bishop Scott Benhase so Episcopalians statewide will be represented in this policy position (draft attached).

All members and clergy are encouraged to sign the petition to the Governor at www.coverga.org ; post and pass out flyers (sample attached); call, write, and visit state legislators; participate in Moral Monday rallies at the State Capitol; and, if so inspired, reverently sit in at the Capitol and be arrested – remember Father Austin Ford and the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy helping the City of Atlanta sanitation workers.

Attachments

Joint Statement Supporting Medicaid Expansion -draft

Medicaid Expansion - sample flyer

Submitted by the Rev. Alexis Chase and Ms. Alisa Daly, Holy Comforter, Atlanta

To Governor Deal, State Senate Leader Cagle, Speaker Ralston, and all Georgians:

We affirm our support for the expansion of Medicaid for Georgia. Through the Affordable Care Act, Georgia has the opportunity to expand Medicaid to cover low-income Americans with incomes at or below 138 percent of the poverty level, with the federal government covering most of the costs. In 2010, 52 percent of Georgia adults with incomes below 139 percent of the poverty level lacked health insurance. By extending coverage to 650,000 low-income, uninsured residents, Medicaid expansion will help Georgians get preventive services, improve health outcomes and help avoid preventable deaths.

3,600 lives saved each year -- 10 per day. 3,600 early, preventable deaths each year is the equivalent of an entire city neighborhood (Peoplestown 3,200) or an entire town (Madison 3,600 or Tybee Island 3,400). We believe it is crucially urgent to stop these preventable deaths.

Good for the Georgia economy. \$40 billion in direct federal dollars and 56,000 new jobs over the next ten years will have a very positive impact on the state economy. The federal government will cover more than 90 percent of the cost of the expansion and Georgia will get tremendous value for its relatively small contribution. Since poor health is the most common reason to miss work, and medical bills are the No. 1 cause of bankruptcy, Medicaid expansion will help maintain the health of the workforce, preventing medical bankruptcies, and preventing related foreclosures. A healthy Georgia is a prosperous Georgia.

Support Georgia hospitals and *insured* patients. In 2010, care for the uninsured cost Georgia hospitals more than \$1.3 billion. Insured families pay an estimated \$1,000 a year in higher premiums to help cover these costs. Medicaid expansion will make a significant contribution to the survival of many Georgia hospitals.

We pray for our elected representatives and all those who hold the public trust that they will act wisely and immediately expand health coverage for the poor in Georgia.

MEDICAID EXPANSION *Sample Flyer*

A good deal for Georgia

Benefits

- **100%** federal match for 3 years
- 90% federal match thereafter
- \$40 billion received in 10 years
- 56,000 jobs gained in 10 years
- **650,000** receive health insurance (<138% FPL)
- **3,600+ lives** saved a year – which equals 10 **preventable** deaths a day!
- ** (see www.healthstatgeorgia.org *Emory and Morehouse medical schools+*)**
- **57%** of Georgians support expansion (AJC 1-13-14, pg1)

While Governor Deal says NO to expansion we encourage you to:

- 1. Call Governor Deal at 404-656-1776 and ask him to support MEDICAID EXPANSION**
 - 2. Sign the petition** at COVER GEORGIA coverga.org to support Medicaid Expansion
 - 3. Call your state legislators and ask them to support Medicaid Expansion; find your legislator at votesmart.org**
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