

EXPAND MEDICAID- Saves Money, Saves Lives



Letters to the Editor

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Lawmakers in Lansing are hard at work on the next fiscal year's budget and have a unique opportunity this year to lock in billions of dollars in federal funds while saving lives at the same time.

Michigan taxpayers stand to reap a big reward if the legislature votes to expand Medicaid this year. Approving an expansion would lock in about \$2 billion a year from the federal government, paying for the expansion without another dime of investment from state residents. Studies show that taxpayers will actually save \$1 billion over the next ten years as the federal government's appropriation covers services currently funded by state taxpayers.

Even better, the expansion would help provide health insurance to approximately 450,000 Michiganders currently without it, cutting down on trips to the emergency room and unnecessary health care costs that could be handled much more simply and cost effectively earlier in the process. That's a win win for taxpayers and the uninsured.

Without action in Lansing, Michigan employers are staring down the barrel of huge financial penalties levied by the federal government if they are unwilling or unable to provide health insurance coverage for their employees.

The good news is that the Legislature has the opportunity to protect job providers by voting to expand Medicaid, locking in billions of dollars in federal funding and providing health insurance for hundreds of thousands of families who cannot afford it – sparing their employers from Obamacare's penalties.

If that isn't reason enough for our Senators and Representatives to vote "yes" on Medicaid expansion, the vote would also save state taxpayers up to a billion dollars in the next decade and save lives. Common sense votes like these don't come along often and the Legislature shouldn't let this one pass them by.

Decades of research has found that healthier people get sick less often and cost less to treat when they need care. State leaders in Lansing are currently considering a common sense move to lock in federal dollars to fund health insurance for hundreds of thousands of Michigan adults currently unprotected. By expanding Medicaid, these families will get access to preventative care and regular care that will keep them healthier and head off potential illnesses.

All that's standing in the way of this life saving progress is a vote by the Legislature to expand Medicaid. I encourage them to vote 'yes' as soon as possible.

According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, healthier people miss fewer days of work and develop healthier lifestyles for their entire families. Meanwhile, children who have access to medical and oral health care miss fewer school days, are better learners and become healthier adult entrepreneurs, employees and providers.

Lawmakers in Michigan have a chance to strengthen a healthy, present workforce while creating a new generation of kids who are healthy and alert at school, by approving an expansion of Medicaid in Michigan.

Medicaid expansion would lock in billions of dollars in federal funding and studies show it will save Michigan taxpayers as much as a billion dollars over the next ten years, as well. In other words, the expansion is good for families, good for the economy and good for taxpayers. I encourage our lawmakers to pass it today.

As lawmakers consider expanding Medicaid here in Michigan I hope they will consider not only the benefits to taxpayers and the uninsured, but our state's economy, too.

Health care is already Michigan's single largest source of jobs. Health care jobs tend to be higher paying and filled by educated, talented workers, while providing our college graduates the opportunity for fantastic, fulfilling careers.

By expanding Medicaid, Michigan's economy will receive about \$30 billion in new federal funds over the next ten years. These funds will help to support and create thousands of new health care jobs for Michigan workers and new college graduates, while strengthening the health care jobs we already have.

Lawmakers should do the right thing, protect residents, be good stewards of tax dollars and grow our state's economy. They should approve a Medicaid expansion right away.