



Talking Points for the Kentucky HEALTH Proposal

Raising Concerns about the Proposed Changes

Governor Bevin's proposal to transform Medicaid puts Kentucky's successful coverage expansion and the tremendous health gains we've made at risk.

This plan threatens to undermine the progress we've made in the past two years and would be a giant step backward for Kentucky.

With the coverage of nearly a half a million Kentuckians at stake, it's alarming to hear that Governor Bevin has vowed to end Medicaid expansion if this waiver isn't approved.

The goal of this waiver shouldn't be to move Medicaid members onto commercial insurance. The goal should be for Medicaid members to use their coverage to improve their health.

Medicaid recipients need access to care without barriers. This allows people to get regular check-ups, preventive care and to manage chronic illnesses. Charging premiums and co-pays discourages people from seeking out necessary care, which can lead to more emergency care and hospitalizations.

This proposal is attempting to turn Medicaid in a jobs program, without creating any jobs. If we want to help people become more self-sufficient, we need to increase the minimum wage and grow better jobs in Kentucky.

This proposal assumes that low income Kentuckians aren't already engaged in their communities and contributing meaningfully to our economy. The fact is that more than half of Kentuckians eligible for expanded coverage are working. And the majority of those not working are students and caregivers.

It's alarming to hear that Governor Bevin has vowed to end Medicaid expansion if this waiver isn't approved. We need to remember that the purpose of this waiver is to demonstrate that Kentucky can provide better access and better care than we are already doing. This waiver will place more burden on low-income, working Kentuckians and our most vulnerable citizens.

The majority of Kentuckians eligible for expanded Medicaid are working. And the majority of those not working, are caregivers and students.

This plan will penalize low-income workers. The goal of this waiver shouldn't be to move Medicaid members onto commercial insurance. It should be to improve the health of low income Kentuckians. To improve their economic status, we need to increase the minimum wage and create better jobs in Kentucky.

The only solid evidence we have about the impact of premiums on low income individuals and families is that it decreases access to care. There's no evidence that charging premiums and enforcing a lock-out period will increase patient engagement or improve health.

Kentucky's Medicaid expansion has been a tremendous success and we need to take steps that build on that, rather than going backward.

Our job as consumer advocates is to ask the same questions that we hope HHS will be asking as they decide whether or not to approve Kentucky's request for a waiver. How will the proposed reforms improve the health of Kentuckians? Will this proposal reduce barriers to care or increase them? How will this demonstration build on Kentucky's successful Medicaid expansion and the tremendous health gains we've made over the past two years?

We need to ensure that the 1115 waiver is designed to meet the unique needs of Kentucky and improve access to critically needed healthcare services for our most vulnerable citizens.

Medicaid Expansion is Already Working in Kentucky

Medicaid expansion is working in Kentucky. In fact, 72% of Kentuckians want to keep it without any changes. (Kaiser Family Foundation Poll, Dec. 2015)

In 2014 ALONE preventive screenings for diabetes, cholesterol, and cancer DOUBLED. And trips to the emergency room decreased. Tens of thousands more Kentuckians are benefiting from early detection, treatment and disease management. And that's good for all of us. Their ability to go to the doctor when they get sick means the rest of the state can stay healthier.

Medicaid coverage for parents has meant that more kids are getting enrolled in coverage and getting the care they need for a healthier future. And it means that parents have the peace-of-mind and security they need to be better parents. They can finally take care of their own health issues – which many have had to ignore in the past – and they are more financially secure, knowing that a medical problem isn't going to lead to bankruptcy.

Medicaid expansion is working for Kentucky. Everyone needs to be secure in knowing they have affordable access to care when they need it. It allows people to get preventive care, manage chronic conditions and seek care when they first get sick, rather than putting it off until it becomes a life threatening condition. We need to build on the foundation of expanded coverage to improve health and manage cost without creating barriers to care.

Medicaid expansion has brought over \$3 billion to providers so far and we've added 13,400 jobs in the health sector. That means more tax revenue for the state, and savings in the state budget from money previously spent on the uninsured. While Kentucky will eventually put in 10% of the costs of expansion, that's a great deal for the commonwealth.