

Increase Access to Affordable Healthcare Through Medicaid Expansion



2023-2024 Legislative Session

North Carolina has one of the highest uninsurance rates in the country. Expanding Medicaid would provide an estimated 600,000 North Carolinians with access to affordable healthcare, save lives, strengthen our economy, and reduce healthcare inequities.

Now is the Time

It's Time For North Carolina To Join the Majority of States in Expanding Medicaid:

- North Carolina is one of only 11 states that have not expanded Medicaid eligibility.¹ Recent survey data shows that approximately 10.4% of North Carolinians were uninsured in 2021—the tenth highest uninsurance rate in the country.² About 79% of uninsured North Carolinians are in working families.³
- Medicaid expansion would reduce uninsurance in our state by an estimated 30 percent.⁴ The largest reduction in uninsurance under Medicaid expansion would occur among Black people.⁵

For Life-Saving Care

Expansion Increases Access to Life-Saving Care:

- Medicaid expansion will save lives by increasing access to necessary health services including preventative care. In one study, researchers found that Medicaid expansion resulted in nearly 12 fewer deaths per 100,000 adults.⁶
- Medicaid expansion will also increase access to mental health and substance use treatment—services of vital importance in addressing the impacts of COVID-19 and the ongoing opioid epidemic. In 2019, an estimated 55% of people in NC experiencing mental illness and/or substance use disorders did not receive treatment because of cost.⁷
- Studies have found Medicaid expansion to be associated with reductions in food insecurity, poverty, and evictions.⁸

Help for Rural Hospitals

Expansion Will Help Bolster Rural Hospitals:

- Providing required treatment for uninsured patients puts significant financial pressure on healthcare providers, particularly those in rural areas.⁹ Six rural hospitals have closed in NC since 2013, and eight others are at “high risk for financial distress.”¹⁰

Help for Rural Hospitals

- Medicaid expansion has been shown to significantly improve finances for hospitals in rural areas. Indeed, from 2013 to 2015, rural hospitals in states with Medicaid expansion increased their operating margins by 4 percentage points more, and their total margins by 2.3 percentage points more than those in non-expansion states.¹¹

A Stronger Economy

Expansion Will Strengthen Our Economy:

- Medicaid expansion will reduce the burden of medical debt for working families. As of 2020, nearly 1 in 5 North Carolinians had medical debt in collections on their credit files.¹² North Carolina ranks sixth in the nation with respect to the percentage of population with medical debt.¹³
- By expanding Medicaid, NC would be eligible for significant federal funding—up to \$1.5 billion—under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and other federal laws.¹⁴ This influx of federal funds into our state’s economy will help increase business activity and the creation of new jobs. In one study, researchers found that Medicaid expansion could create more than 37,000 new jobs in NC.¹⁵

Endnotes:

1. Other states without Medicaid expansion include Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. See “Status of State Medicaid Expansion Decisions: Interactive Map,” Kaiser Family Foundation, Nov. 9, 2022, <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/status-of-state-medicaid-expansion-decisions-interactive-map/>.
2. “Health Insurance Coverage of the Total Population: 2021,” Kaiser Family Foundation, <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/total-population/>; Douglas Conway and Breana Branch, “Health Insurance Coverage Status and Type by Geography: 2019 and 2021,” American Community Survey Briefs, p. 13 (Sept. 2022), <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2022/acs/acsbr-013.pdf>.
3. Michael Simpson and Ella Brett-Turner, “Who Would Gain Coverage under Medicaid Expansion in North Carolina?” Urban Institute, p.4 (Nov. 2022), <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/who-would-gain-coverage-under-medicaid-expansion-north-carolina>.
4. Id. at p. 3.
5. Id.
6. Brian Lee, et al., “Medicaid expansion and variability in mortality in the USA: a national observational cohort study,” *Lancet Public Health*, Vol 7., p. 1 (Jan. 2022), [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(21\)00252-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(21)00252-8/fulltext).
7. “What Expanding Medicaid Would Mean for North Carolina,” NC Dept. of Health and Human Servs. (June 9, 2022), <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/blog/2022/06/09/what-expanding-medicaid-would-mean-north-carolina>.
8. Madeline Guth et al., “The Effects of Medicaid Expansion under the ACA: Studies from January 2014 to January 2020,” Kaiser Family Foundation (November 30, 2022), <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/report/the-effects-of-medicaid-expansion-under-the-aca-updated-findings-from-a-literature-review/>.
9. “Medicaid Budget Highlight,” NC Office of State Budget and Management (May 10, 2022), <https://www.osbm.nc.gov/media/2579/open>.
10. Brendan Riley and Andrea Dreier, “Increasing Health Access and Improving Health Outcomes for North Carolinians,” North Carolina Justice Center, (Feb. 28, 2019), <https://www.ncjustice.org/publications/increasing-health-access-and-improving-health-outcomes-for-north-carolinians/>.
11. Jessica Schubel and Matt Broaddus, “Uncompensated Care Costs Fell in Nearly Every State as ACA’s Major Coverage Provisions Took Effect,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (May 23, 2018), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/uncompensated-care-costs-fell-in-nearly-every-state-as-acas-major-coverage>.
12. “Medical Debt Burden in the United States,” Consumer Finance Protection Bureau (Mar. 1, 2022), <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/newsroom/cfpb-estimates-88-billion-in-medical-bills-on-credit-reports/>.
13. Id.
14. “Medicaid Budget Highlight,” NC Office of State Budget and Management (May 10, 2022), <https://www.osbm.nc.gov/media/2579/open>; Robin Rudowitz et al., “New Incentive for States to Adopt the ACA Medicaid Expansion: Implications for State Spending,” Kaiser Family Foundation (Mar. 17, 2021), <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/new-incentive-for-states-to-adopt-the-aca-medicaid-expansion-implications-for-state-spending/>.
15. Leighton Ku, et al., “The Economic and Employment Benefits of Expanding Medicaid in North Carolina.” The George Washington University Ctr. For Health Policy Research p. 1, (June 2019), <https://www.conehealthfoundation.com/app/files/public/621ee3b4-cb3f-4854-a9a8-7af04fd2166b/expanding-medicaid-in-north-carolina---2019.pdf>.