



November 13, 2013

Dear CSWE Program Member Chair:

As a leader in social work education, we are writing to encourage you to harness the social justice passion of your students, faculty and alumni to advocate for the Medicaid expansion in your state.

The 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) is the most significant piece of U.S. healthcare legislation since the enactment of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. However, one critical component of the ACA - expansion of Medicaid coverage to individuals with incomes below 133% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) - is not mandatory. The 2012 Supreme Court decision gave states the option to extend Medicaid eligibility to this population. **At this point in time, your state has chosen not to do the expansion.**

The importance of the Medicaid expansion for the at-risk populations served by social workers cannot be overstated. These individuals - primarily low-income, childless adults - are among our nation's most vulnerable. Many have unmet health needs, including disabling physical conditions and serious mental and substance use disorders. Hospital emergency rooms are often their only connection to the healthcare system. Medicaid coverage offers access to preventive healthcare, treatment and care management for people who desperately need these services.

The Medicaid expansion will help stem our nation's growing health disparities. Because people of color represent the majority of uninsured individuals with incomes below 133% FPL, the Medicaid expansion will significantly benefit this population. The expansion is an opportunity to reduce the incidence of diseases that disproportionately affect people of color such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and HIV/AIDS.

The Medicaid expansion is a good deal for states. The federal government will cover the full cost for all newly eligible Medicaid enrollees from 2014-2016. Thereafter, the federal share gradually diminishes to 90 percent. The millions of additional federal dollars coming into states through the expansion will have a stimulus effect, creating more jobs for social workers and other healthcare professionals. Moreover, the expansion may actually lower state healthcare spending by reducing the need for expensive emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Much of the benefit of the ACA for the lowest income individuals in our communities will be foregone if a state chooses not to expand Medicaid, since individuals below the poverty line are ineligible for subsidized coverage in the health insurance exchanges. This will leave millions of people, including the working poor, without health coverage, thus creating a population that is "too poor for Obamacare."

Our three associations are joining the nationwide movement of health and social service providers to support full implementation of the expansion - and we hope your school of social work will join us. Attached you will find data on the number of people in your state who will benefit from the Medicaid expansion, as well as suggested messages for your students, faculty and alumni to use in their communication with your governor and legislators. If you need additional information, please contact Stacy Collins at scollins@naswdc.org or Christina Andrews at candrews@mailbox.sc.edu

In addition to advocating for this change directly, we believe this is an excellent learning experience for your students on advocacy strategy and the implementation of social policy. We hope that you will consider integrating this task into a relevant course or activity within your social work program.

The *NASW Code of Ethics* speaks of our obligation to "*advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.*" At this point in time, there is no better way to fulfill this obligation than advocating for nationwide implementation of the Medicaid expansion.



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Students/Faculty/Alumni:

To implement the Medicaid expansion in your state, it is critical that your state leaders hear from you. Please send a note to your governor and state legislators using the message below, or craft one of your own.

Also, consider adding an anecdote from your own experience that illustrates the need for the expansion, e.g., a client who had to forgo needed treatment for lack of healthcare coverage or a family who lost their housing or declared bankruptcy due to unpaid medical bills.

Suggested Message:

Dear [GOVERNOR/STATE SENATOR/STATE LEGISLATOR]

As a social work [STUDENT/EDUCATOR/ALUMNI] at [INSERT SOCIAL WORK SCHOOL], I urge you to pass the Medicaid expansion.

[INSERT STATE] has [INSERT NUMBER] citizens who could obtain health care coverage if our state expands Medicaid. Expanding Medicaid gives more individuals and families an opportunity to get affordable coverage, preventive services, and economic security against accidents, illness or job loss. Providing coverage through Medicaid also brings in guaranteed revenue to [STATE], making our economy stronger. We will be making a smart investment in our state's economy and workforce, our state's health care system will be stronger and more cost-effective, and hard-working [STATE] residents will be healthier.

List of state governors with mailing addresses:

<http://www.nga.org/cms/governors/bios>

State Legislature Websites:

<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/state-legislatures.html>

**Uninsured nonelderly adults (age 18-64)¹ with incomes below
100% of the federal poverty line in non-expansion states²**

Alabama	191,320
Alaska	17,290
Florida	763,890
Georgia	409,350
Idaho	54,780
Indiana	181,930
Kansas	77,920
Louisiana	242,150
Maine	24,390
Mississippi	137,800
Missouri	193,420
Montana	40,140
Nebraska	32,570
New Hampshire	26,190
North Carolina	318,710
Oklahoma	144,480
Pennsylvania	281,290
South Carolina	194,330
South Dakota	25,480
Tennessee	161,650
Texas	1,046,430
Utah	57,850
Virginia	190,840
Wisconsin ³	-
Wyoming	17,390

¹ Excludes undocumented immigrants and legal immigrants who have been in the US for less than five years.

² Source: Kaiser Family Foundation: <http://kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/the-coverage-gap-uninsured-poor-adults-in-states-that-do-not-expand-medicaid/>

³ Wisconsin provides Medicaid eligibility to adults up to 100% FPL. However, the Medicaid expansion will allow those with incomes up to 133% FPL to remain on Medicaid and the state will gain the additional federal dollars associated with the expansion.