



Testimony Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Community Health

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As you make decisions on the DCH budget, I encourage you to keep in mind that your decisions directly impact people's lives and are not just numbers on a spreadsheet. Because of its importance, I'm going to limit my comments to the Medicaid expansion.

The expansion of the Medicaid program, as recommended in Gov. Snyder's budget, will be one of the most important decisions you will ever make as a lawmaker. You will decide if hundreds of thousands of low-income working adults and parents will gain access to health care coverage and health care security for themselves and their families, or whether they will be forced to remain uninsured because they cannot afford to buy healthcare coverage.

As you know, the governor studied this issue very carefully before making his recommendation and he concluded it is the right thing to do for the state and its residents. The Medicaid expansion has the potential to do more good than any other policy proposal over the last 40 years. Providing comprehensive healthcare coverage to more than 300,000 of your constituents will be a great achievement, and this can be done while saving state funds, bringing more federal funds to the state, and reducing health care costs for all of us—a new “triple aim”!

Concern has been expressed by some about this expansion; let's address the concerns rather than deny the coverage.

Concern has been raised that the federal government will renege on the enhanced funding. The federal government has a long history of increasing or enhancing federal Medicaid funds, not reducing them; health care is too important. There is also an opt-out for the state in the unlikely event that it would become necessary. As you know, the governor has charted this program through 2035 to ensure its viability.

Concern has been raised about provider capacity. That is a legitimate concern but it applies to all of us with the projected physician shortages. We need to find solutions not deny coverage. The governor has suggested one solution with the better use of the skills and abilities of health care professionals to reduce the impact of the projected physician shortage.

In addition, the newly eligible population would be enrolled in managed care plans, which have expressed interest and capacity to handle the newly eligible population. This would also extend comprehensive mental health services to a large population in our state, enhancing our overall quality of life and safety.

Let's set politics aside and work together to make the expansion work for Michigan—those newly qualifying, the currently insured, providers and businesses.

Thank you.