

Now is the time! Medicaid Expansion Talking Points

by Jane Adams, Alabama Arise Cover Alabama Campaign Director - March 12, 2021

TIMING: On Thursday, March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the **American Rescue Plan Act** which will bring back federal funding for states to newly expand Medicaid. Thanks to this law, if Alabama expanded Medicaid the state would get an estimated \$940 million boost in federal Medicaid funds over two years. This is enough money to fully fund Alabama's share of the cost of Medicaid expansion for many years.

MESSAGING ON COST: For years, Governor Ivey and legislative leaders have said that the barrier to expanding Medicaid is the cost. Thanks to the enhanced federal funding, Alabama will have the money to cover the cost of expansion. **Now more than ever before, we have the chance to ensure that no Alabamian has to choose between going to the doctor and putting food on the table.**

MEDICAID EXPANSION IS POPULAR: A January 2021 poll from Cygnal polling firm showed that nearly 70% of Alabamians support Medicaid expansion, including 64% of Republican voters. The poll also revealed that Alabamians support using a portion of funds from any gambling or medical marijuana legalization to expand Medicaid.

MEDICAID IS NECESSARY FOR COVID-19 RECOVERY: Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic will require Alabama to reinvigorate our public health system. Medicaid is a health lifeline for one in four Alabamians and an economic engine for communities across our state. As we struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic, extending Medicaid coverage to adults with low incomes is the single biggest step Alabama can take to restore health, save our rural hospitals and boost economic recovery.

THE VAST MAJORITY WHO WOULD GAIN COVERAGE ARE WORKING: More than 100,000 Alabamians in the coverage gap hold regular jobs that pay low wages. Thousands more are self-employed, serve as caregivers or attend school. Medicaid expansion has proven to incentivize work and create jobs.

Medicaid expansion would ensure coverage for 300,000 Alabamians, including:

- People who work low-wage jobs and can't afford private coverage
- Workers who are between jobs
- Adults who are caring for children or older family members at home
- People who have disabilities and are awaiting SSI determinations
- Adult college students
- Uninsured veterans

Medicaid expansion would help more Alabamians have:

- Regular primary care and preventive checkups
- Earlier detection and treatment of serious health problems
- Regular OB/GYN visits without referral
- Less dependence on costly emergency care
- Better health and greater financial peace of mind

Medicaid expansion would promote racial equity by:

- Reducing racial disparities in coverage, which is more likely to leave out people of color with low incomes.
- Lowering the high rate of African American infant deaths.
- Lowering the high rate of African American maternal deaths.
- Covering chronic health conditions that disproportionately affect African Americans, making them more vulnerable to COVID-19 complications.

Medicaid expansion would bring our federal tax dollars home to support:

- Healthier families, workers and communities
- Stronger rural hospitals and clinics
- Stronger community mental health and substance use disorder services
- A needed boost in jobs and revenue for state and local economies

Bottom line: Medicaid expansion is the single biggest step we can take to weather the pandemic and move Alabama forward. It's time to invest in a healthier future for our state and our people.