

Luca, Lavinia

From: Karen Kinsell MD <susie4797@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 5, 2019 6:13 AM
To: Luca, Lavinia
Subject: Comment on Patients First Act

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Thank you once again for allowing me to comment despite your website closing early on Dec 3.

I am the sole medical provider in Clay County. We are poor, 41% poverty rate including 85% of African Americans under the poverty level. We are among the top 5 counties in Georgia for uninsured adults, with a rate over 35%. We also have the fourth worst health status in Georgia.

There is currently no financially viable way to provide healthcare here and in similar areas of Georgia. So many people cannot pay their own way for primary care, not to mention for medications, and especially ER/hospitalizations and specialty care. Yet the physicians and hospitals must still provide at least basic care, without adequate compensation.

This stress has already led to the closing of two area hospitals, and limits the quality of care at others. When hospitals and clinics are financially strained and reduce services, it affects everyone in the community, not just the poor.

Although federally funded FQHCs can help fill in primary care gaps, they are still too expensive for many (\$30 and up) and do nothing about hospitals and specialty care. They also will benefit from Medicaid expansion because they are able to draw down significantly more federal funding for their facility for every Medicaid patient seen.

People who are not able to get appropriate medical care are sicker, less likely to work, and die prematurely. I can tell you of specific people who are not able to go back to work because they need knee surgery, who had a heart attack due to lack of appropriate care, and who face death because they cannot get treatment for their cancer.

Georgia is at the bottom nationwide in terms of percentage of our people who are uninsured. We have the opportunity now to insure almost half a million of our people through full Medicaid expansion.

It would be unconscionable not to take advantage of this opportunity to care for our own, especially with a 90% federal support. Even looking at this as just an economic decision, infusing our economy with billions of federal dollars is an opportunity that will pay for itself through increased employment.

A work requirement is impractical. States who have attempted this have found it expensive, and in areas like ours with unemployment above 6%, simply unfair. Many people who need Medicaid are unable to work due to their physical and or emotional disabilities, which are worsened without the ability to get treatment.

Thirty seven other states have already expanded Medicaid, all to a greater degree than this proposed waiver. It's time to address the horrendous healthcare situation in Georgia, and further our legacy as a state that leads, not stumbles far behind the rest of the country.

Thank you,