



**MichUHCAN Testimony
On
Medicaid Expansion Legislation
To
House Government Operations Committee**

MichUHCAN, a non-profit, statewide education and advocacy organization on health care issues, strongly supports the expansion of Medicaid in Michigan as allowed by the Affordable Care Act passed in 2010. Medicaid is not a “hand out”, but rather a “hand up” to the hundreds of thousands Michigan citizens who lack the ability to purchase health insurance. Medicaid is an investment in our people that has and will continue to pay large, positive dividends into the future. Sick people cannot work or work less productively, sick children cannot learn at the rate of their healthy peers. Denying healthcare coverage and or asking our citizens to get intermittent healthcare in our hospital Emergency Rooms is costly, immoral and downright ridiculous.

One cannot opine that he/she is working for a healthy, productive state and then refuse to vote for a program that supports our citizens to achieve these ends. I ask Senators who oppose the legislation to “walk in the shoes” of their poor, uninsured constituents for a month. Many are working several jobs that do not provide health insurance. Any medical need can keep them from work for days and a hospitalization can drive them to bankruptcy. It is not easy to find jobs with health insurance when your skills and/or education are not sufficient for to qualify you for them. Our citizens need programs and supports that raise them up the economic ladder and not push them off.

Let me be clear that support of the proposed legislation does NOT mean we embrace the call for Medicaid waivers included in the legislation. We believe that the waivers are not needed, not practical and ill advised. We are concerned that the “skin in the game” required may not be feasible for many people. Additionally asking our most vulnerable citizens to meet health goals in

order to get reduced co-pays and deductibles is counterproductive. People who have limited financial resources, little access to nutritious, affordable food, jobs or transportation will not work. We, who have better jobs and much more access to community resources, are often unable to reach health goals. Why should others with fewer resources be held to a higher standard than the rest of us. It doesn't make sense. These waivers could well push many people off the ladder to health and self-sufficiency. We hope that you will continue to study the waivers before they are implemented to assure they do not have the unintended consequence of an UNhealthier Michigan.

To many of us, this battle over Medicaid Expansion appears to be a political, ideological one, rather than one that is based on research data and common sense.

MichUHCAN asks Senators to step back and review the data of the current program. It works. When indigent citizens have access to healthcare and no longer have the stress of paying healthcare bills on their own, they are healthier, happier and more productive. Our founding fathers envisioned a structure of government that supported citizens in the pursuit of happiness. If we want citizens who work and contribute to Michigan's economy, let's start by removing the barrier of ill health.

The Expansion of Medicaid is good for our citizen's health and good for Michigan's economic health. It will bring new jobs, save old jobs, save health care costs over time and help Michigan's budget immediately when the federal government picks up 100% of the expansion costs from 2014-2016.

Please, Senators, look at the health research and do the math. Medicaid Expansion should then be a "no brainer" YES vote for all of you. Michigan citizens do not need you to spend any more time "studying" the issue or looking for ways to "make it better" from your point of view. Just vote yes and evaluate its impact over time. Changes can then be made on data and not political bias. Your inaction is causing anger and frustration to build in the electorate. Vote Yes immediately.