

It's time to expand Medicaid and close Alabama's health coverage gap

By Jim Carnes, policy director | December 2021

For years, Gov. Kay Ivey and legislators have said cost is the barrier to covering Alabamians with low incomes through Medicaid. Thanks to federal COVID-19 relief funding with incentives for Medicaid expansion, any concerns about that barrier are gone. Now more than ever before, we have the opportunity to ensure no Alabamian has to choose between going to the doctor and putting food on the table.

Nearly 70% of Alabamians support Medicaid expansion, including 64% of Republican voters, [according to a January 2021 poll](#). As we continue to 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 our state's economic recovery.

Who would gain coverage under Medicaid expansion?

Medicaid expansion would ensure coverage for more than 340,000 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

How would Medicaid expansion keep people healthier?

Medicaid expansion would help Alabamians stay healthy by ensuring pathways to:

- 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

How would Medicaid expansion reduce health disparities?

Medicaid expansion would promote health equity in Alabama by:

- Reducing the racial/ethnic disparities in health coverage
- Lowering the high rate of Black infant deaths
- Lowering the high rate of Black maternal deaths
- Covering chronic health conditions that disproportionately affect people of color and make them more vulnerable to COVID-19 complications

How would Medicaid expansion boost the economy?

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 would save lives, create jobs and strengthen Alabama's health care system. Closing the health coverage gap is one of the biggest policy changes available to move our state forward. The governor and the Legislature should embrace this opportunity to build a brighter, healthier future for Alabama.

Join our Cover Alabama campaign!

An end to Alabama's coverage gap is within reach. Through our Cover Alabama campaign, Alabama Arise is working to ensure that every Alabamian can afford to get the health care they need when they need it. Visit coveralabama.org to learn more and add your name to our ever-growing list of supporters.