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Oklahoma Policy Institute

OPPOSE HB 2665: DON'T KICK LOW-INCOME PARENTS OFF MEDICAID

HB 2665 would seek federal permission to strip Medicaid eligibility from all non-pregnant, non-disabled adults under 65. In Oklahoma, this group is made up of about 110,000 very low-income parents of dependent children per year.

HB 2665 would add to the ranks of the uninsured. Oklahoma still has one of the highest uninsured rates in the US, with 1 in 7 Oklahomans (15.4 percent) without coverage in 2014. When every other state is seeing significant progress on this issue, Oklahoma should not be moving in the opposite direction.

HB 2665 would balance the budget on the backs of the poor. In order to qualify for Medicaid as a parent, members can earn no more than about \$8,000 per year - less than \$700 per month. HB 2665 would scrounge savings by ending the health coverage of those least able to afford it. The bill's author, Rep. Cox (R-Grove), says that because members of this group are not physically unable to work, they can cope with losing coverage just by getting a job. This ignores circumstances that may prevent members from working part- or full-time – such as responsibilities as a caretaker, debilitating illness or health conditions, or simply living where jobs aren't available.

HB 2665 wouldn't generate real savings. Although it would "save" the state over \$100 million, the state would lose more than \$200 million in federal matching funds. In addition, hospitals, doctors and other health care providers would lose thousands of patients who would suddenly have no way to get care, threatening businesses and livelihoods.

HB 2665 would almost certainly be disallowed by federal regulators. In order to receive federal Medicaid funding, states are required to provide coverage to some groups, including low-income parents. This bill would require the Health Care Authority to apply for a waiver that would be denied – or that would risk ending coverage for *all* Oklahoma Medicaid members, including children, pregnant women, seniors and persons with disabilities.

Please oppose HB 2665 in order to keep health insurance for low-income parents. We should look elsewhere to balance the budget.



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