



# OKPOLICY.ORG

## Oklahoma Policy Institute

### **2018 POLICY PRIORITY: EXPAND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE USING FEDERAL FUNDS**

#### **Background**

Oklahoma's uninsured rate is one of the highest in the US. The effects of this ripple across our entire health care system, driving up uncompensated care costs, stretching limited safety net resources, and putting whole families' financial stability at risk. Without affordable, consistent health care, uninsured Oklahomans go without lifesaving preventive treatments, struggle to fill prescriptions, and are largely excluded from help for substance abuse and mental health disorders.



It doesn't have to be this way. To date, 32 states have accepted federal dollars to expand access to care for the low-income uninsured, whether through Medicaid programs or by subsidizing private coverage. In those states, coverage expansions have resulted in increased access to affordable health care; improved financial security and health; positive effects on state budgets; and positive or neutral effects on employment and the labor market. In Oklahoma, expanding coverage would bring care to more than one hundred thousand people, mostly adults working low-paying, service sector jobs. Expanding coverage would also create thousands of jobs and help pull the state's remaining rural hospitals and other care providers back into the black.

#### **The Solution**

States have a number of options when it comes to expanding coverage. Oklahoma could simply choose to allow the expansion population to join the state's Medicaid program, SoonerCare, where an infusion of relatively healthy adults will help lower costs. Alternatively, the state could apply for a federal waiver to use expansion dollars to subsidize private coverage through Insure Oklahoma.

In order to ensure that expansion enrollees have access to needed care without growing state bureaucracy or unnecessarily burdening low-income families, Oklahoma should resist adding work requirements, higher copays, premiums, and other similar restrictions.

#### **What You Can Do**

Contact your state Representative and Senator and urge them to accept federal dollars to expand access to coverage for the low-income uninsured. You can look up your Senator and Representative at <http://okpolicy.org/find-your-legislator/>, call the House switchboard at 405-521-2711, and call the Senate switchboard at 405-524-0126.

To receive SMS advocacy alerts on important health care issues, text OKHEALTH to 51555.