

# Expand Health Coverage

## BACKGROUND

Oklahoma's uninsured rate is one of the highest in the US. The effects of having so many uninsured Oklahomans 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 health care, uninsured Oklahomans go without lifesaving preventive treatments, struggle to see a doctor and 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, 37 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 100,000 people, mostly adults working low-paying, service sector jobs. Expanding coverage would also help pull the state's remaining rural hospitals and other care providers back into solvency.

## 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.

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

You can look up your Senator and Representative on our website under the “**Advocacy**” tab on our main menu. You can also call the House switchboard at **405-521-2711**, and the Senate switchboard at **405-524-0126**.



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