



Medicaid Expansion Ballot Initiative and Human Dignity

The Missouri Catholic Conference, in an effort to uphold the dignity of the human person in accord with Catholic social teaching, is lending its support to a ballot initiative which would expand Missouri's Medicaid program to provide health insurance coverage to low-income Missouri citizens currently living without it. The measure is expected to appear on the ballot in the fall of 2020.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 9.4% of Missouri citizens (566,000) were uninsured in 2018. Missouri's Medicaid program (MO HealthNet) provides health insurance coverage for the elderly poor, the disabled, children and low-income pregnant women/custodial parents. Low-income able-bodied adults, however, only qualify for MO HealthNet coverage if they earn less than 22% of the federal poverty level (FPL) (\$5,665/year for a family of four).

Many low-income earners in Missouri go without health insurance coverage altogether because of the high cost of health insurance premiums, even when coverage is available through their work or on the health insurance exchange. This puts them at risk for chronic health problems and prevents early diagnosis and treatment of disease. The proposed ballot initiative (proposal no. 2020-63) would expand MO HealthNet, providing coverage to individuals making up to 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL) (\$34,763/year for a family of four). It is estimated that between 200,000 and 250,000 additional adults and children would enroll in MO HealthNet if the program were expanded.

36 states and the District of Columbia have already expanded Medicaid since the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010. In the fall of 2018, voters in Idaho, Utah and Nebraska elected to expand Medicaid by way of a ballot initiative.

Research is showing that in most cases, Medicaid expansion improves access to care, utilization of health care services, affordability of care, and financial security among the low-income population. It also results in reductions in uncompensated care for hospitals and clinics, improving operating margins and financial performance, thereby helping these providers continue to provide care, especially in remote areas.*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that concern for the health of its citizens requires society to “help in the attainment of living conditions that help citizens grow and reach maturity: food and clothing, housing, health care, basic education, employment, and social assistance.” (CCC No. 2288) The Catholic Bishops of Missouri are lending their support to this effort. Will you join them?

* Larisa Antonisse, et al., *The Effects of Medicaid Expansion under the ACA: Updated Findings from a Literature Review*, Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Issue Brief, August 2019, <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-effects-of-medicaid-expansion-under-the-aca-updated-findings-from-a-literature-review-august-2019/>

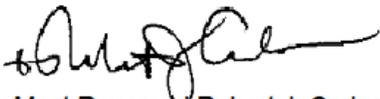
Statement of the Missouri Catholic Bishops on Ballot Initiative (2020-63) to Expand Medicaid

We wish to express our support for the current effort to expand the Missouri Medicaid (MO HealthNet) program. MO HealthNet currently provides health coverage to Missouri's most vulnerable citizens, including the elderly, the disabled, pregnant women, and children. It plays a vital role in sustaining the healthcare delivery system in our state. In our Catholic ministries throughout the state, however, we find that there are still many Missouri citizens who lack access to affordable healthcare coverage that is so necessary for human flourishing. We, therefore, support expanding the program to cover low-income workers, since doing so will help lead to better health outcomes for them and enhance their ability to continue working to support themselves and their families.

We recognize that some may not agree with expanding Medicaid by way of a constitutional amendment or in a manner that bypasses the state legislative process. We offer *our* support for this effort because of the unmet healthcare needs of the working poor and to ensure the continued delivery of care to those who need it most through the Missouri healthcare system, including Missouri's Catholic hospitals. We offer this support understanding that current federal law includes pro-life protections in Medicaid through the Hyde Amendment. We encourage Catholics and others of goodwill to give serious consideration to supporting this effort to expand the Missouri Medicaid program.

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