

HB374 INTRODUCED



1 I5KRZZ-1
2 By Representatives Moore (M), Morris, Sellers
3 RFD: Ways and Means General Fund
4 First Read: 25-Apr-23
5
6 2023 Regular Session



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SYNOPSIS:

This bill would provide legislative findings that the state is in a rural healthcare crisis with many rural hospitals at risk of shutting down

This bill would expand the Medicaid program to provide assistance to all persons for whom matching funds are available to the state under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to Medicaid; to expand the program to provide assistance to certain state residents; to direct the Alabama Medicaid Agency to implement the expansion; to direct other state agencies and entities to provide certain assistance; and to provide for appropriations for adequate funding.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. The Legislature finds all of the following:

(1) The question of how to provide comprehensive, quality health care to all Alabamians regardless of income, health status, age, or gender has been one the Alabama Legislature has asked itself time and time again.



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29 (2) The residents of this state are suffering because
30 of their lack of access to adequate health care.

31 (3) The residents of Alabama have been hit hard, and it
32 is imperative that access to health care is expanded to ensure
33 the act of visiting a doctor does not result in financial
34 calamity for individuals or families.

35 (4) Reducing the number of uninsured patients will keep
36 hospitals open. Since 2011, 17 Alabama hospitals have closed,
37 88 percent of these remaining rural hospitals are operating in
38 the red, as well as 75 percent of all Alabama hospitals.
39 Research suggests that now that the federal government's COVID
40 relief funding has ended, at least 15 additional rural
41 hospitals in the state are at immediate risk of closure. These
42 hospitals depend on federal dollars to offset the cost of
43 serving a high proportion of low-income and uninsured
44 patients.

45 (5) Broad access to health care leads to preventive
46 care, which produces healthier families, a healthier
47 workforce, and an all-around healthier state.

48 (6) With the expansion of Medicaid, approximately
49 397,000 uninsured Alabamians would be eligible to receive
50 low-cost health insurance with a majority of these residents
51 being employed. Research has shown that in states that have
52 expanded Medicaid, expansion has improved workforce
53 participation by making it easier for people to work,
54 including to seek work or to continue working. Covering
55 low-income adults would also reduce the burden of medical
56 debt, currently the leading cause of personal bankruptcy.



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57 (7) Expansion of Medicaid will result in reduced state
58 spending on health care related services to those previously
59 uninsured residents with incomes below 133 percent of the
60 federal poverty level.

61 (8) Expansion of Medicaid will also increase coverage
62 and access to health care for our veteran population to
63 support and supplement the cost for their medical and mental
64 health needs.

65 (9) In addition to enhancing access to health care,
66 expansion of Medicaid would promote revenue and economic
67 activity in this state, resulting in the preservation and
68 creation of jobs.

69 (10) The Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama
70 (PARCA) released a report in 2022 that found that expanding
71 Medicaid coverage in Alabama could save the state almost \$400
72 million per year - more than enough to cover the cost of
73 expansion - and have an average positive economic impact of
74 \$1.89 billion per year over that same time frame.

75 (11) Studies have shown that a one dollar (\$1) increase
76 in federal spending on Medicaid yields an additional 65 to 75
77 cents of economic activity.

78 (12) The Alabama Health Care Improvement Task Force,
79 created on April 6, 2015, by Executive Order No. 4,
80 unanimously recommended to the Governor to close Alabama's
81 health coverage gap, which the expansion of Medicaid would
82 achieve.

83 Section 2. (a) The Medicaid program shall provide
84 assistance to all persons who apply for and are determined to



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85 be eligible for assistance and for whom federal matching funds
86 are available to the state under the Patient Protection and
87 Affordable Care Act, Public Law 111-148, March 23, 2010, as
88 amended by the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act 4
89 of 2010, Public Law 111-152, March 30, 2010.

90 (b) The Alabama Medicaid Agency shall take all steps
91 necessary to implement the Medicaid expansion program as
92 provided for in subsection (a) and shall be the lead agency
93 for the implementation in this state. The Alabama Medicaid
94 Agency shall seek assistance from any state or federal
95 agencies or entities to implement the program as appropriate,
96 and all state agencies and entities shall provide assistance
97 as requested by the agency.

98 (c) The Legislature shall annually appropriate adequate
99 funding to the Alabama Medicaid Agency for the purpose of
100 implementing and operating the Medicaid expansion program
101 pursuant to this section.

102 Section 3. This act shall become effective immediately
103 following its passage and approval by the Governor, or its
104 otherwise becoming law.