



Medicaid Expansion Will Help Close the Health Care Gap for African Americans in Tennessee

The new health reform law expands the Medicaid program to provide health care for millions of people without insurance. Many of these people are working adults with lower incomes. The Supreme Court ruled in June that states can choose whether to accept the Medicaid expansion.

If Tennessee chooses to expand its Medicaid program, the federal government will pay *all* of the cost for the first three years. After that, the federal government will cover at least 90% of the cost. This is a great deal for Tennessee. The expansion will bring billions of federal dollars and thousands of jobs to Tennessee.¹ It will also provide health coverage for tens of thousands of uninsured African Americans in Tennessee who would otherwise go without health care.

- African Americans make up about 17% of Tennessee's population.² Many of these individuals don't have access to health insurance. In fact, nearly 17 % of African Americans in Tennessee are uninsured.³ If the state accepts the Medicaid expansion, **as many as 118,100 African Americans in Tennessee will gain access to health insurance.**⁴
- **Expanding Tennessee's Medicaid program would help reduce health disparities in Tennessee.** African Americans are more likely to have chronic illnesses. And, the effects of those illnesses are often worse:
 - African Americans are three times more likely to die from asthma than white Americans;
 - African American males are 50% more likely than white males to have prostate cancer and 2.4 times more likely to die from the disease;
 - African American females are 36% more likely to be diagnosed with cervical cancer than white females; they are also more than twice as likely to die from it;
 - African American adults are more than twice as likely as white adults to be diagnosed with diabetes.⁵
- Even though individuals in the African American community are more likely to face chronic illnesses, many African Americans who have these illnesses do not have health insurance, including:
 - 1 in 9 African Americans with heart disease, stroke, or chronic lung disease;
 - 1 in 10 African Americans with diabetes;
 - 1 in 13 African Americans with cancer.⁶

Expanding Medicaid means that many African Americans in Tennessee who have not had insurance will now be able to see a doctor. They will be able to fill prescriptions. They can keep up with screenings and other preventive care. People will be able to act quickly and avoid life-threatening events if an illness gets worse or comes back. Without the Medicaid expansion, many of these chronically ill people will not be able to afford the care they need.

¹ John Holahan and Irene Headen, *Medicaid Coverage and Spending in Health Reform: National and State-by-State Results for Adults at or below 133% FPL*, Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured (May 2010) at 40, Table 6, available at <http://www.kff.org/healthreform/upload/Medicaid-Coverage-and-Spending-in-Health-Reform-National-and-State-By-State-Results-for-Adults-at-or-Below-133-FPL.pdf>.

² *Tennessee Quick Facts*, U.S. Census Bureau (August 2012), available at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/47000.html>.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey*, 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Health Insurance Coverage Status, Table S2701, (30 July 2012) (generated using American FactFinder, available at <http://factfinder2.census.gov>).

⁴ Families USA: How Health Reform Helps Communities of Color in Tennessee (October 2010) at 1, available at <http://familiesusa2.org/assets/pdfs/health-reform/minority-health/helping-communities-of-color/Tennessee.pdf>.

⁵ *Medicaid: A Lifeline for Blacks and Latinos with Serious Health Care Needs*, Families USA (October 2011) at 12-13, available at <http://familiesusa2.org/assets/pdfs/medicaid/Lifeline-Blacks-and-Latinos.pdf>.

⁶ *Id.* at 20, available at <http://familiesusa2.org/assets/pdfs/medicaid/Lifeline-Blacks-and-Latinos.pdf>