Virginia MIRC <vamirc@mirc.virginia.gov>

New MIRC Comment

1 message

[redacted] Mo n, Oct 14, 2013 at 10:54 PM
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Comment - Good afternoon Delegates and Senators. October is breast cancer awareness month and i'm here to talk to you about how expanding medicaid can increase access to preventative services and change breast cancer outcomes in the Commonwealth. We have come a long way in what we know about breast cancer. We know that it is the second most diagnosed cancer in women and that it is much less fatal when detected early. In Virginia between 2004 and 2008, roughly 23,000 women were diagnosed with invasive breast cancer. Every female on my fathers side has been diagnosed with breast cancer. In college I had the privilege of working with the Every Woman's Life program at the Department of Health in Fredericksburg. This federally and state funded program provides free cervical and breast cancer screenings to Virginia women below 200% of the federal poverty line. While there are approximately 80,000 Virginia women eligible for the program, this past year only 7,500 were served- that is roughly 1 out of every 10 women eligible. Let me say that again- our state's breast cancer prevention program for low income women only has the capacity to serve 1 out of every 10 women eligible. Some individuals, those at 100% or above the federal poverty line will be able to purchase health insurance through the marketplace. These plans are required to cover preventative care such as mammograms. However, we know there is a significant portion of the population left out of the marketplace- roughly 270,000 individuals in Virginia. Dr. Laura Wherry analyzed health survey data collected between 1993 and 2009. She examined the services women used in states that expanded their medicaid programs and those that did not. Her study, found that eligible women in states with Medicaid expansions were more likely to receive clinical breast exams and that medicaid expansion narrowed the utilization gap in preventive services between higher and lower income women. (1) Low income women have few options for early detection services in the Commonwealth. Expanding medicaid will improve access to preventative care and improve breast cancer mortality. WEB Dubois said that a system can not fail those it was not built to protect. The Affordable Care Act was built to protect and cover an additional 270,000 individuals in Virginia. We have failed them by not expanding our medicaid program at this time. You have the power to save lives – expand access to health care by expanding Medicaid to low-income Virginians. 1 Wherry, L. "Medicaid Family Planning Expansions and Related Preventive Care."American Journal of Public Health (2013)