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## Medicaid expansion

1 message

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To: Medicaid Innovation and Reform Commission members

This letter is written to support the expansion of Medicaid for 400,000 low income, uninsured Virginians who desperately need this help. As a physician and citizen of the Commonwealth I am deeply concerned about the medical, moral, and financial implications of this humanitarian crisis in our midst.

When I was in private practice I provided medical care, gratis, for a good number of people who found themselves in this circumstance, so let me share some perspectives with you. This is what I commonly found:

1. Those who have no insurance often postpone, or do without, medical care until their conditions become desperate –and then, the duration of care and the expense involved is much greater than if they had been able to address their condition early on. An example of this I recall was a young woman who I was called to see in the Emergency Room who had an overwhelming kidney infection and life threatening sepsis. She had developed a urinary tract infection about a week before, but had no insurance and decided that she could not afford to see a physician. She emerged from the hospital 10 days later, alive, but owing over \$20,000 to the hospital for her care. What is sad is that a doctor's visit and a \$10 antibiotic prescription, early on, would have averted this whole scenario and her eventual bankruptcy.
2. Fear of the expense of medical care and the real threat of financial ruin that accompanies this creates an untenable situation for too many Virginians, with the result being significant pain and suffering and a significant, often unnecessary, subsequent expense for the current system to absorb.
3. Those with chronic conditions (diabetes, hypertension, etc.) usually go untreated as they cannot afford the cost of the recurrent care and medication which their conditions require, with the result being premature, often life-altering complications. This, too often results in loss or impairment of the ability to work and ultimately increased cost on the system.

I believe that providing Medicaid to the currently uninsured would allow for a more humane and moral approach to our current situation and would ultimately bring down the overall cost of medical care. This is especially true for those who can least afford its complications.

Finally, from a strictly moral point of view, Jesus said it very succinctly: "In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me."

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