



New MIRC Comment

1 message

Wed, Oct 16, 2013 at 11:14 AM

Reply-To: [REDACTED]

To: vamirc@mirc.virginia.gov

First Name - David

Last Name - DeBiasi

Organization Name - AARP Virginia

Comment - Dear Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Commission, Virginia has the chance to reform its Medicaid program and provide health coverage to hardworking Virginians and their families -- and it just makes good sense to do it. As we face the realities of a slow growth economy, any of us — or our friends or families — could fall on hard luck, lose a job, or lose our insurance and not be able to afford health care coverage. We need a safety net to protect the health of our citizens. We don't know the future of health care. But we know the value of the next few years. Taking advantage of the federal government's promise to pay 100% of the costs for three years is significant to many hard working Virginians. Many of them have never had insurance or fall in and out of having it or being able to afford it. Just because we don't know the future is no reason to deny them peace of mind for three years. This would be especially helpful to older workers who have lost their jobs and can't afford health insurance while they search for a new one. Since mid-2010, the average duration of unemployment for experienced workers is over one year – significantly longer than less experienced workers. The risk of being uninsured and unemployed at the same time could be reduced if Virginia would make health care coverage available through Medicaid expansion. This issue is particularly important to 62,000 people age 50 to 64 and not yet eligible for Medicare. These middle-aged adults are more likely to face the onset of health conditions that, if left untreated, could inevitably increase their need for and use of health care and long-term care. Since all workers contribute to the cost of Medicaid throughout their working lives, providing them with Medicaid when they need help is just simple fairness. AARP appreciates the work of DMAS and the Commission's oversight of their reform efforts. I heard Secretary Hazel speak last week at a national conference and was encouraged to hear how far we have progressed in our negotiations with CMS. We are pleased to see progress for the dually eligible, foster care, the simplification of enrollment processes and the strengthening of the behavioral health programs. We encourage the Commission to do what you can do to help speed up progress in other areas such the standardization of administrative processes, supporting the health information exchange and expediting the review process for innovative pilot programs. AARP urges the Commission to take its work serious and move through these reforms so people who need care, can get the care. There is little hope for them to afford health care otherwise. Reform and expand Medicaid because it makes sense for the health of Virginia's residents. It is the right thing to do.