



October 8, 2013

The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.
Chairman
Medicaid Innovation and Reform Commission
201 North 9th Street
General Assembly Building
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senator Hanger:

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers-Virginia Chapter, I would like to express our strong support of the expansion of the Medicaid program in Virginia. Social workers provide mental health services every day to low-income and disadvantaged populations. We support accessible and affordable quality health care for all Virginians.

Adults that would benefit from expansion are at a high risk for untreated mental health and substance abuse disorders, chronic conditions and comorbidities and socioeconomic issues such as unstable employment, insecure housing and limited support systems. Social workers are firsthand witnesses to the psychosocial effects of being uninsured. We work with this population and understand the tremendous positive impact access to health care and mental health services would have on these low-income Virginians.

In addition, expanding the Medicaid program is a smart economical decision. If we move forward, Virginia will receive \$20 billion in federal funding over the next ten years- which will help support Virginia jobs and our economy.

The decision to not expand the Medicaid program will have a direct negative impact on the life, health and economic stability of many of Virginia's low-income residents and intensify the existing health disparities.

NASW-VA respectfully urges this Commission to recommend Virginia move forward with Medicaid expansion because it is critical for Virginia and Virginia's taxpayers. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra A. Riggs".

Debra A. Riggs, Executive Director
National Association of Social Workers-Virginia Chapter