



Virginia MIRC <vamirc@mirc.virginia.gov>

New MIRC Comment

1 message

Mon, Oct 7, 2013 at 8:24 PM

Reply-To: [REDACTED]
To: vamirc@mirc.virginia.gov

First Name - Patricia

Last Name - Hyer

Organization Name -

Comment - I strongly support the expansion of Medicaid in Virginia and urge the Commission to make this recommendation!

 **Patricia_Hyer.pdf**
42K

October 7, 2013

Chairman Hanger
Medicaid Reform and Innovation Commission
Commonwealth of Virginia

Dear Chairman Hanger:

I write today to press for positive support for the expansion of Medicaid in Virginia. I hope the Commission will consider the urgent need of many working poor Virginians who struggle today without health insurance and without the financial means to participate in the health care exchanges recently opened.

It has been my privilege to work with the Free Clinic of the New River Valley for several years as a member and chair of the Board of Directors. The organization has worked tirelessly to try to address the medical, dental, and behavioral health needs of our patients who are low income and without medical insurance. Their needs are great. Their gratitude for the services provided is heartfelt and deeply moving. Yet, the entire system of care provided through Free Clinics throughout Virginia is a fragile, vulnerable patchwork of volunteer services, charitable care provided by local hospitals, providers, and pharmaceutical firms, donations from individuals, and gifts from corporations and foundations. The budget for our clinic is over \$1 million, and the fundraising to support these services is endless and precarious. Our capacity to serve patients depends entirely on the willingness of hundreds to make contributions of both time and money, which fluctuates with economic conditions and competes with other pressing priorities. Nearly 2,000 patients were served by the clinic last year. Yet this is not a sustainable, scalable model. There must be a better way to deliver care to those most vulnerable citizens of our region, most of whom work in low paying wage jobs in our community. Expansion of the Medicaid program would provide a real opportunity for many of low income patients to have more certain access to health care on a regular basis.

The Free Clinic of the New River Valley is extremely well managed. The staff has worked exceptionally hard to envision its future in the uncertain environment of the Affordable Care Act and possible Medicaid expansion in Virginia. Almost 90% of our patients have incomes below 138% of the federal poverty level. Thus most would be eligible for an expanded Medicaid insurance program. The clinic has applied for and just received a federal grant to transition to a Federally Qualified Health Care facility, allowing us to serve low income patients with Medicaid insurance. We are gearing up to serve these patients because we know that the Free Clinic is already their preferred medical home and that our local physician community could not absorb many new patients with Medicaid insurance. And we will continue to serve the uninsured as well.

On behalf of our many hard working and medically vulnerable patients, I strongly urge the Commission to adopt Medicaid expansion in Virginia and to do what is so right by our citizens. Crippling health conditions or crippling medical expenses are no way to have productive engaged citizens in Virginia.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important issue.

Patricia Hyer

Blacksburg, VA