



Virginia MIRC <vamirc@mirc.virginia.gov>

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## New MIRC Comment

1 message

Mon, Sep 30, 2013 at 1:28 PM

Reply-To: [REDACTED]

To: vamirc@mirc.virginia.gov

**First Name** - John

**Last Name** - Whitfield

**Organization Name** -

**Comment** -



John Whitfield's comments.pdf

38K

I have spent the last 33 years providing free legal assistance to low-income residents of the Shenandoah Valley. Over these years, I have continually witnessed the terrible impact that large medical bills can have on uninsured low-income folks, and how they will forego needed medical care because they can't afford insurance or the medical bills they would incur. So many of them have been driven into bankruptcy simply because they couldn't afford health insurance, and many others have faced prolonged wage garnishments, rendering them destitute, as a result of unpaid hospital and doctor bills. Having witnessed this blight on the lives of so many hard-working, honest, but poor members of our Valley communities, I fervently support the proposed expansion of Medicaid.

This step would, in one fell swoop, eliminate one of the largest causes of bankruptcy and destitution in Virginia. At the same time, it would allow our poorer neighbors to access the medical care they need but forego due to lack of insurance, thereby promoting their well-being and, in all likelihood, preventing many of their health problems from going untreated and triggering more serious, expensive, emergency health crises. Medicaid expansion would be the most effective anti-poverty program ever adopted by Virginia!

Medicaid expansion is a great deal for Virginia financially, since the federal government has promised to pick up the lion's share of the costs. Frankly, we'd be fools to turn this down. If we have concerns about the long-term commitment of the federal government to honor these promises, we can certainly use an automatic trigger provision reversing the expansion if the federal support does not continue as promised. In the meantime, thousands of low-income Virginians would have been provided access to affordable health care for the first time. What could possibly be wrong with that, even if it were only temporary?

Some who oppose the expansion of Medicaid have derogated the program, saying that the poor will not receive quality health care under expanded Medicaid. My experience suggests that there is no basis for such fears. My clients who have Medicaid coverage receive good health care – and considering the only alternative is no coverage at all – how could anyone reasonably suggest they would be worse off with Medicaid benefits than without any health care insurance coverage at all?

I hope and pray that the Medicaid Innovation and Reform Commission will endorse the expansion of Medicaid at your earliest opportunity.