

## Expanding and Strengthening Medicaid to Meet the Needs of Low-Income Americans

### Take Action! Urge Congress to Strengthen Medicaid in Health Reform Legislation

1. **Introduce yourself** as a RESULTS activist and a constituent committed to quality, affordable health care for everyone in the U.S.
2. Point out the importance of addressing the needs of low-income Americans in the health reform debate; **37 percent of uninsured Americans have incomes below the federal poverty line.**
3. State that you are **pleased that both the House and Senate health reform bills expand Medicaid eligibility to millions more low-income persons.** This will provide coverage to 15 million uninsured persons.
4. However, **remind them** that, unlike the House bill, the Senate bill only expands Medicaid to those at 133 percent of poverty (House = 150 percent); it does not raise reimbursement rates (House = Medicare rates) and delays expansion until 2014 (House = 2013). Finally, both bills require states to finance part of the expansion after a few years.
5. Assert that cost-efficient public health plans like Medicare, Medicaid and CHIP **demonstrate the effectiveness of public programs**, particularly in meeting the needs of low-income Americans.
6. Americans want Congress to **pass health reform that works for everyone**, especially our most vulnerable citizens.
7. **Urge your members of Congress to strengthen and expand Medicaid as part of health reform by:**
  - a. Expanding existing Medicaid benefits to everyone at or below 150 percent FPL,
  - b. Securing full federal financing for the expansion,
  - c. Increasing Medicaid reimbursement rates to Medicare rates or better, and
  - d. Not making our most vulnerable wait years to get Medicaid coverage.

Note: To find contact information, including telephone numbers and addresses for congressional offices and the names of the health staffer, visit the [Take Action Now](#) page of this RESULTS website. For directory assistance, you can contact the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

### Medicaid Serves America's Most Vulnerable People

Medicaid is America's largest single health care program, covering 60 million low-income people including 29.4 million children. It is also the largest children's health program in the country, and arguably the most comprehensive and effective plan for children available. Medicaid services include physician and hospital visits, well-child care, health screenings, vision care and dental services and all services that a health care professional identifies as "medically necessary." Medicaid protects its enrollees against unaffordable, out-of-pocket costs, with federal limits on how much the patient can be charged for services.

To qualify for Medicaid, an individual must meet both financial criteria and fit into a "categorically eligible" group such as low-income children, pregnant women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and parents. Unfortunately, these levels vary by state and by category. For example, low-income adults with no children are virtually shut out of the program; currently 43 states prohibit these people from enrolling in Medicaid, regardless of their income.

### Strengthening and Expanding Medicaid Must Be a Part of Health Reform Legislation

Medicaid is the right program to cover the underserved population. One-third of the 46 million uninsured people in the U.S. fall below the poverty line. It makes sense to base Medicaid eligibility on income and to cover all people below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. The House-passed bill, the *Affordable Health Care for America Act* (H.R.3962) raises it to this level, which will reduce the number of uninsured by up to 15 million people. The Senate's *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* only raises it to 133 percent. Congress should also secure full federal financing for this expansion. The federal government, not cash-strapped states having trouble keeping up with current Medicaid enrollment, should finance 100 percent of this expansion. Furthermore, reimbursement rates for Medicaid are some of the lowest, which cause many doctors to decline taking Medicaid patients. Congress must raise reimbursement rates for doctors, so that more Medicaid patients can get care (the House bill raises them to Medicare rates).

Finally, expanding and strengthening Medicaid also makes economic sense. Every state has a Medicaid program, making it easy to build on immediately. Medicaid also carries 20 percent lower overhead and administrative costs than private insurance, creating a more efficient and cost-effective program.

For more information about these and other issues, as well as other actions you can take, visit [www.results.org](http://www.results.org). Learn more about the RESULTS' work on Medicaid at [http://www.results.org/issues/us\\_poverty\\_campaigns/health\\_care\\_for\\_all/medicaid/](http://www.results.org/issues/us_poverty_campaigns/health_care_for_all/medicaid/).