

Conversation Guide for Meeting with Community Leaders

We urge all hospital CEOs to identify key local business, civic and government leaders and use this guide to have a conversation with them about Medicaid expansion. The goal is to reinforce the importance of your hospital to the community, increase their knowledge of what Medicaid is and to stress the critical need to expand coverage. The “ask” at the end of the meeting is for them to be open to an Alabama effort to expand Medicaid and to be willing to be contacted as things evolve.

Important Role of Hospital in Community (use Economic Impact Calculator Worksheet)

- My hospital employs _____ and is the cornerstone of this community.
- We have a _____ economic impact annually.
- We support other industries and provide _____ additional jobs.
- This hospital is vital in recruiting new business to this area and keeping jobs.

However, we face many challenges:

- Today, 75 percent of hospitals are operating in the red (88 percent for rural hospitals). Since 2011, 12 hospitals have closed. If we cannot find a way to invest in our hospitals by paying for the care they provide, we may have to face the reality that some hospitals will not be here in the future.
- Significant Care Provided to the Uninsured
 - Because Alabama’s Medicaid program is one of the most restrictive in the country, 300,000 adults working in industries like construction, retail, food service, and transportation do not have access to health insurance.
 - They depend on the emergency department for care, which is the most expensive place to receive primary care. This ultimately drives up the cost of health care for everyone.
In our county/area, there are _____ individuals without insurance.
- There are increased financial challenges in providing care for those with mental health and substance abuse issues, opioid addiction, and inpatient health care for prisoners.

We need to work together to find solutions while also Investing in our community’s Infrastructure

- We are asking you, as one of our community leaders, to commit to working with us to maintain our community’s infrastructure by investing in the future of our hospital.

How can we do this? First, talk about Medicaid. Share more details about the existing Medicaid program, its importance to the state’s health care infrastructure and the tremendous benefits of expanding Medicaid. It is an often misunderstood program that is vital to the state’s health care system.

What exactly is Medicaid?

- Medicaid is a state and federal program that provides health insurance for low-income children, pregnant women, the elderly and the disabled.
- There are ZERO non-disabled, childless adults (ages 18-64) enrolled in Medicaid.
- Alabama has one of the most restrictive eligibility thresholds in the country. Adults in a family of three who earn more than \$312 a month cannot qualify.
- Patients do not receive a direct cash benefit; they receive an insurance card for basic health care.
- Medicaid is a bare-bones program that only covers the federal required minimum services and people.

Why Should We Expand Medicaid?

- Consider expanding Medicaid as an investment in the state's largest employers:
 - Estimated economic boost of \$28 billion statewide
 - Predicted to create an additional 30,000 jobs statewide
 - These aren't just predications anymore. Expansion states are already seeing positive results with increased economic activity and job creation.
- Medicaid expansion would keep Alabama federal tax dollars in the state instead of sending them to other states like California and New York.
- Without expansion, hospitals and other providers will continue to shoulder the cost of caring for the uninsured, a burden some cannot continue to do and survive.
- There would be flexibility to design a program that meets Alabama's needs.
- After the initial investment, the increase in the federal match for existing state programs positively impacts the state's General Fund and ETF budgets. The savings coupled with the increased economic activity nearly offset the cost to the state.
- Increased access to health insurance results in better health outcomes and a healthier, more productive workforce.

The Cost of Doing Nothing

- Can you Imagine this community without a hospital? If nothing changes that could be the reality.
 - Hospitals would be forced to eliminate services or jobs. Hospital job losses have a ripple effect on rest of the local economy.
 - Doctors would leave the community. Pharmacies would likely close.
- Where would you go for care if a loved one was in a medical crisis? If the hospital is not here, it does not matter what insurance you have; you won't have access.
- Infrastructure is vital to economic development. How difficult would it be to recruit new industry to this community without access to health care?

Partners Moving Forward

- We are asking you to partner with hospitals and help us find an Alabama solution to Medicaid expansion. We want to continue discussions with you on how we can work together to make this happen.
- We urge you to talk to other community leaders, neighbors, friends and family about Medicaid expansion and why it is important to all Alabamians.
- Stay engaged in the conversation and learn more about this issue.
- Remain open to ideas and solutions for Medicaid expansion in Alabama, understanding that it is an investment in the future of health care.

Questions?