

For ECU Health, which serves a vast rural region with a large number of uninsured community members, many of whom also struggle with chronic disease, Medicaid expansion would help solidify high-quality health care in eastern North Carolina and transform lives. Medicaid expansion is a critical initiative that would help improve access to care for people across the state. If the NC General Assembly expanded Medicaid, more than 500,000 North Carolinians - over 100,000 of whom live here in eastern North Carolina - would become eligible for the coverage they need to get care for chronic conditions, prevent illness and disease progression and live healthy, productive lives. Medicaid expansion is vital to meeting our mission to improve the health and well-being of the East.

Update: On Friday September 16, the North Carolina Healthcare Association provided a proposal for not only covering the cost of Medicaid Expansion in North Carolina and accessing HASP funding, but also provided reasonable reform recommendations to the states certificate of need laws. These recommendations did not come easily but were included in a good faith effort to move expansion forward for the people of North Carolina.

1. Hospitals have a federal mandate and moral obligation to provide care.

Hospitals are the only businesses that have a federal mandate and moral obligation to provide a service whether an individual can pay or not. ECU Health is honored to provide critical care to the communities we serve, but it is a significant challenge to pay nurses, technicians, doctors and suppliers for providing care to those without the means to pay. In 2020, ECU Health provided more than \$200 million in uncompensated care. This includes charity care, bad debt, Medicaid and Medicare losses. Providing access to care in rural communities is already difficult due to a number of factors including health disparities and geographic challenges. When adding in the financial realities, many rural hospitals across the nation have closed and many more are in jeopardy of shutting their doors.

2. North Carolina taxpayers are already paying for Medicaid expansion in other states.

Taxpayers in North Carolina are already paying for Medicaid expansion in other states and have been doing so since the first state expanded Medicaid in June 2010. This means federal tax dollars of North Carolinians are paying for Medicaid coverage in other states, while more than a million of our community members remain without coverage. While there would be some cost if Medicaid expansion becomes a reality, North Carolina hospitals have already voiced their commitment to cover this for the state. Importantly, this commitment is only possible through the passage of the Healthcare Access and Stabilization Program (HASP) which would provide additional funding for hospitals in the state (see statement #7). The benefits of Medicaid expansion for the state far outweigh any costs that may need to be covered by hospitals.

3. Medicaid expansion will improve health outcomes.

Research shows that when states expand Medicaid, it saves lives. A study found that Medicaid expansion was associated with nearly 12 fewer deaths per 100,000 adults each year in expansion states. That is because people with health coverage are more likely to get preventative care, more likely to catch and treat diseases like cancer and heart disease early, and less likely to skip medications because of the cost. (Source: NCDHHS)

4. **Medicaid expansion builds a healthier workforce for North Carolina.**

Access to affordable health care helps more people participate in our labor force. Many small businesses can't afford to offer health coverage to employees – even in the best of times. Medicaid expansion can build a healthier workforce for businesses like childcare, restaurants, and the service industry by helping more employees have access to affordable health insurance. Medicaid expansion also helps more people with disabilities enter the workforce because without it, many people with disabilities must live in poverty to maintain their Medicaid eligibility. In eastern North Carolina, Medicaid expansion will help provide better access to care for former members of the military, farmers, and other agricultural workers. (Source: NCDHHS)

5. **Expansion will boost rural economies**

Expansion will give hundreds of thousands of people in rural areas access to affordable health insurance, while creating jobs and strengthening the economy in rural communities. The additional funding that flows into rural communities with Medicaid expansion helps to retain providers, keep rural hospitals open and recoup the previously uncompensated costs to health care providers for providing care for uninsured people. (Source: NCDHHS)

6. **Healthcare Access and Stabilization Program will help optimize Medicaid expansion.**

Health care across the state is also relying on state lawmakers to support Healthcare Access and Stabilization Program, along with Medicaid expansion, which would provide North Carolina hospitals with up to \$1.8 billion in funding and the State General Fund \$60 million annually. At no cost to the state, North Carolina can apply for this level of funding as a result of moving to Medicaid managed care. The HASP program can help stabilize the financial well-being of rural hospitals and enable them to maintain and possibly expand care as they continue to recover from the chaos of a worldwide pandemic.

Learn more

Visit [ECUHealth.org/StateofHealthCare](https://ecuhealth.org/StateofHealthCare) to learn more and stay engaged on this important effort to expand access to care for rural eastern North Carolina.

Learn more about Medicaid Managed Care: ncmedicaidplans.gov/home

Learn more about the Healthcare Access and Stabilization Program: ncha.org/hasp-resources