



## KENTUCKY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

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March 29, 2013

Commissioner Lawrence Kissner  
Cabinet for Health and Family Services  
Department of Medicaid Services  
275 East Main Street, 6W-A  
Frankfort, KY 40601-2321

### **Re: Support for Medicaid Expansion**

Dear Commissioner Kissner:

The 12 Christian traditions in the Kentucky Council of Churches have a long-standing prayerful commitment to ensuring that each and every Kentuckian gain access to affordable, quality health care. For this reason, we write now in support of the Commonwealth claiming the federal funds set aside for this state so that we may expand Medicaid eligibility to 138% of federal poverty level as intended by the Affordable Care Act.

This historic opportunity would at once address the poor health of Kentuckians and additionally bolster the economy of the Commonwealth. Expansion of access to affordable, quality health care for all is a goal of the Christian community. Healthcare is essential to protecting productive and healthy lives with dignity for all. Jesus came to give life abundantly (John 10:10) and his ministry showed that healing is part of that gift. This Medicaid moment is a rare opportunity to “move the needle” for the welfare of Kentuckians, because a large number of us are un- or under-insured and we now have the chance to gain new access to health care.

This is also a moment, however, when we call for improvements in the administration of Medicaid as Kentucky healthcare has become out-sourced to Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) whose performance has not lived up to expectations. The Commonwealth should insist that for-profit MCOs be good and effective partners if they are to benefit from the large market increase of expanded Medicaid eligibility.

If the Commonwealth uses this opportunity well, we see these among the positive outcomes:

- In Kentucky as many as 329,000 uninsured people would become eligible. An estimated 621,000 Kentuckians, 14.4% of our total state population, had no health insurance coverage in 2011. With the accepting of federal funds, already set aside for this project, around 57% of un/under-insured Kentuckians will become covered.

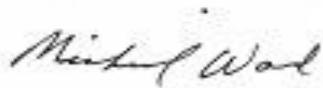
*Please remember the Council in your prayers and in your planned giving, annual giving, and church budgeting!*

African Methodist Episcopal " African Methodist Episcopal Zion "Christian Church in KY "Christian Methodist Episcopal  
Cumberland Presbyterian " Episcopal " Evangelical Lutheran Church in America " Kentucky Baptist Fellowship " Presbyterian Church USA  
Roman Catholic " United Church of Christ " United Methodist " Union Church, Berea  
Observer-Participants: Friends Meeting Berea/Lexington " Salvation Army (SWONEKY & KY/TN Divisions)  
Ecumenical Partners: Church Women United " Church World Service " Kentuckiana Interfaith Community " Oikocredit "  
Paducah Cooperative Ministry

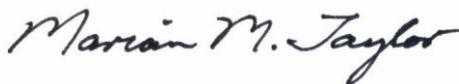
- Kentuckians who are likely to use emergency services will receive coverage and can better avoid costly crisis care. Expansion benefits the individual patient's health, the family unit's financial status, and the taxpayer in that the public will not be forced to pick up the tab for unpaid bills. The cost of the uninsured to the Kentucky economy tops \$1.1 billion per year today.
- If Kentucky chooses to accept this program we will all be affected. As advocates for the most vulnerable, we particularly note that significant numbers of veterans, persons with disabilities, and persons with HIV stand to gain from the change, as well as the many children affected.
- Kentucky currently ranks very low in terms of mortality, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. Other states that expanded their Medicaid programs in the last decade to cover low-income adults with children or disabilities found that their death rates declined.
- Kentucky's expansion cost during the first six years is estimated at \$547 million in state funds because the federal government will pick up 100% of expansion costs from 2014 to 2016. By putting up these additional state funds to expand Medicaid, Kentucky will attract more than \$11 billion in additional federal dollars to the state economy through 2019 and could add almost 15,000 jobs. The additional cost will be offset because the Medicaid expansion and availability of coverage through Health Exchanges under the ACA will reduce the amount of uncompensated care in Kentucky by an estimated \$687 million to as much as \$1.375 billion from 2014 to 2019. Given the reduction in uncompensated care, Kentucky would experience net savings of between \$140 million and \$828 million through 2019 by taking advantage of the ACA Medicaid offer.

In conclusion, please claim the federal funds set aside for us as a way to increase dramatically the health care access of Kentuckians and improve our economy and communities. And know that in our churches we pray regularly for public servants such as yourself as you face these momentous decisions and challenges.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Mike Ward, Executive Board President



The Rev. Marian M. Taylor, Executive Director

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