



March 17, 2021

Dear Representative:

The undersigned organizations represent thousands of patients and consumers in Arkansas who face serious and chronic health conditions. We write today to express our continued support for Medicaid expansion in Arkansas. Medicaid coverage is critical to helping our state's most vulnerable patients access care, especially in the midst of a global pandemic.

SB410 would create the Arkansas Health and Opportunity for Me (ARHOME) Program to continue Medicaid expansion in Arkansas. Medicaid expansion is critically important for patients with serious and chronic health conditions. For example, research shows an association between Medicaid expansion and early stage cancer diagnosis, when cancer is often more treatable.¹ Medicaid expansion provides continuous care to pregnant women before, during, and after pregnancy, leading to decreases in both maternal deaths and infant mortality.² Another study found that Medicaid expansion was associated with reductions in deaths from opioid overdose, including those involving heroin and synthetic opioids.³ Finally, Medicaid expansion is also playing an important role in addressing health disparities—one recent study found that states that expanded Medicaid under the ACA have reduced racial disparities in timely treatment for cancer patients.⁴ Our organizations strongly support the continuation of Medicaid expansion in Arkansas.

Our organizations urge you to reconsider the premiums and cost-sharing for patients in SB410 that could limit access to care. Research has shown that even relatively low levels of cost-sharing for low-income populations limit the use of necessary healthcare services.⁵ Additionally, we urge you to ensure that ARHOME does not create administrative barriers and confusion for patients that could reduce patients' access to care. Finally, our organizations urge you to fully reinstate retroactive coverage instead of limiting it to 30 days.

Our organizations thank you for your commitment to continuing Medicaid expansion in Arkansas and urge you to minimize any financial and administrative barriers to patients as you reauthorize this critical program.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Diabetes Association
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Kidney Fund
Arthritis Foundation
Chronic Disease Coalition
Hemophilia Federation of America
National Hemophilia Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
Susan G. Komen
The AIDS Institute
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

¹ Aparna Soni, Kosali Simon, John Cawley, Lindsay Sabik, “Effect of Medicaid Expansions of 2014 on Overall and Early-Stage Cancer Diagnoses”, *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 2 (February 1, 2018): pp. 216-218. Available at <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304166>.

² Adam Searing and Donna Cohen Ross. “Medicaid Expansion Fills Gaps in Maternal Health Coverage Leading to Healthier Mothers and Babies,” (May 2019). Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, Center for Children and Families. Accessed at: <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Maternal-Health-3a.pdf>.

³ Kravitz-Wirtz N, Davis CS, Ponicki WR, et al. Association of Medicaid Expansion With Opioid Overdose Mortality in the United States. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(1):e1919066. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.19066. Accessed at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2758476>.

⁴ American Society of Clinical Oncology, “Racial Disparities in Access to Timely Cancer Treatment Nearly Eliminated in States with Medicaid Expansion.” American Society of Clinical Oncology Annual Meeting. June 2, 2019. Access at: <https://www.asco.org/about-asco/press-center/news-releases/racial-disparities-access-timely-cancer-treatment-nearly>

⁵ Samantha Artiga, Petry Ubri, and Julia Zur, “The Effects of Premiums and Cost Sharing on Low-Income Populations: Updated Review of Research Findings,” Kaiser Family Foundation, June 2017. Available at: <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-effects-of-premiums-and-cost-sharing-on-low-income-populations-updated-review-of-research-findings/>.