

Protect Our Care Wisconsin: What expanding Medicaid would mean for Wisconsin

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WISCONSIN - Today, Governor Tony Evers once again called for the state to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. For more than a decade, Wisconsin Republicans have refused to do so, ensuring Wisconsin would pay more to cover fewer people through the popular BadgerCare program. Medicaid has been proven to increase [access](#) to care, improve [financial security](#), and produce better health [outcomes](#). Today, more than 1 million Wisconsinites receive their coverage through [Medicaid](#), a pillar of the American health care system.

Medicaid expansion is essential to ensure every American has quality, affordable health coverage. Despite the overwhelming benefits of Medicaid expansion, Republicans in Wisconsin have spent years undermining the ACA and its expansion of Medicaid at every turn, blocking 87,000 from coverage. Yet the program has become increasingly popular among conservative voters. [75 percent](#) of Americans have a favorable view toward the Medicaid program, and [61 percent](#) of Americans in non-expansion states favor expansion.

Research confirms that Medicaid expansion saves lives and [drastically reduces](#) racial health disparities. States that expanded their Medicaid programs saw a [51 percent](#) reduction in the gap between uninsured white and Black adults after expansion, and a [45 percent](#) reduction between white and Hispanic adults. Medicaid has also served as a lifeline during the pandemic, with research showing expansion states were [better positioned](#) to handle the economic fallout from COVID-19. However you approach it, Medicaid is an essential component of American life and more important than ever.

A Closer Look At Medicaid Across Wisconsin:

87,000 Wisconsinites Would Gain Coverage If The State Expanded Medicaid. The ACA provides generous funding to states to expand their Medicaid coverage and provide quality coverage to millions of Americans, but Republican leaders in Wisconsin have refused expansion. If Wisconsin had accepted Medicaid expansion, 87,000 Wisconsinites [would be covered](#) by Medicaid. Research confirms that Medicaid expansion increases [access](#) to care, improves [financial security](#), and leads to better health [outcomes](#).

Medicaid Expansion In Wisconsin Would Save Lives. Between 2014 and 2017, Wisconsin's rejection of Medicaid expansion [cost](#) an estimated 576 lives in adults aged 55 to 64. States that accepted expansion saved the lives of more than [19,000](#) older adults over the same period.

Reduced Racial Disparities In Coverage And Access. Increasing Medicaid access is the single most important action available to expand coverage and reduce racial inequities in the American health care system. The ACA led to historic reductions in racial disparities in access to health care, but racial gaps in insurance coverage [narrowed the most](#) in states that adopted Medicaid expansion. States that expanded their Medicaid programs saw a [51 percent](#) reduction in the gap between uninsured white and Black adults after expansion, and a [45 percent](#) reduction between white and Hispanic adults. [60 percent](#) of Americans who would gain coverage if the remaining 12 hold out states expanded Medicaid are people of color.

Reduced Medical Debt. Access to Medicaid means access to high quality coverage and extremely low cost sharing, without the premiums. As a result, Medicaid eliminates the types of medical costs that can lead to unpaid bills and medical debt. Over the past decade, research has shown the gap in medical debt between Medicaid expansion and holdout states has grown approximately [30 percent](#). In 2020, Americans living in holdout states carried an average of [\\$375](#) more in medical debt than their counterparts in expansion states.

Medicaid Expansion Reduces Uncompensated Care Costs. Through lower premiums and expanded Medicaid, there has been a profound reduction in uncompensated care costs, which are often the direct result of individuals who are un-or-underinsured. Compared to 2013, hospitals' uncompensated care costs decreased by more than [\\$14 billion](#) in 2017, or 26 percent. Medicaid expansion

plays a large role in reducing uncompensated care costs. When Louisiana expanded Medicaid in 2016, it experienced a [33 percent reduction](#) in uncompensated care costs as a share of total operating expenses among hospitals, with a 55 percent reduction for rural hospitals.

Medicaid Expansion Helps Rural Hospitals Stay Open. Rural communities already faced persistent [disparities](#) in health outcomes prior to the pandemic. Issues such as limited access to care, higher rates of uninsured Americans, and health care workforce shortages that existed before COVID, intensified over the past two years. Rural hospital closures are associated with a [6 percent](#) increase in death rates in surrounding counties. Rural hospitals in Medicaid expansion states are [62 percent](#) less likely to close.