



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

Dear Representatives,

We, the undersigned leaders in our respective rural communities, write to urge you to protect and grow Montana's economy by addressing health care access and supporting SB 395.

Today, 195,000 Montanans are uninsured, but they still need security regarding their health care. With the federal government paying most of the cost, **expanding Montana's Medicaid program is an opportunity we can't afford to pass up.** At least 60,000 uninsured adult Montanans would gain health care coverage under an expansion, an estimated 45,000 of these live in rural communities. Having more insured Montanans means financial security for rural hospitals and clinics, so they'll be ready when rural Montanans need them.

Fiscally, it's a good deal for Montana. 100% of the cost to expand Medicaid to uninsured working Montanans is covered by the federal government thru 2016, gradually decreasing permanently to 90%. Every dollar spent on Medicaid returns \$7 to the local economy. This means an expansion of Medicaid would add an estimated **\$2.3 billion to Montana's economy** as a result of increased economic return in the health sector from 2014-2020, and \$700 million per year in economic activity. An expansion will also create 18,000 jobs in Montana.

In addition, insuring more Montanans means fewer costs from uncompensated care are passed on to businesses through increased premiums and burdens to counties and the state. Medicaid is also an important program for our seniors, as it pays **nearly 40% of long-term care** for elderly Montanans.

Everyone wins with expanded security in health care. Implementation of the Medicaid expansion is the best choice for Montanans, for our citizens, our economy, and our future. By making a smart investment in our state's economy and workforce, our state's health system will be stronger and more cost-effective, and hard-working Montanans will be healthier.

Sincerely,

Alyce Streich	Columbia Falls
Amanda Judisch	Bozeman
Clair Cabal	Stevensville
Dave Tyler	Belgrade
Denna Wagner	Laurel
Evan Pollitt	Missoula
Gerri Rose	Missoula
Jerry Yenne	Bigfork
Jolynn Yenne	Bigfork
Karen Dwyer	Thompson Falls
Margaret Adam	Bozeman
Margaret Novak	Chester
Margie Gignac	Kalispell
Martha Thompson	Lakeside
Mike Novak	Chester
Pat Hennessey	Helena
Patty Corbett	Missoula
Robert Boettcher	Big Sandy
Sister Mary Lou Mendel	Billings
Steph Larsen	Missoula
Winona Bateman	Missoula