Medicaid Expansion

**Position:** The National Multiple Sclerosis Society urges full expansion of Medicaid pursuant to the Affordable Care Act so that all qualified Georgians have access to affordable, comprehensive health care.

**Medicaid**

Medicaid provides health coverage to nearly 9 million non-elderly individuals with disabilities. It offers prescription drug coverage and standard medical benefits like physician and hospital care; home- and community-based services that allow people with MS to remain independent and avoid premature admission to costlier institutional facilities; and other forms of long-term services and support.

**Medicaid in Georgia**

- Total enrollment: nearly 1.9 million
- Percentage enrollees disabled: 15%
- Number enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid: 271,380

**Medicaid Expansion**

The Affordable Care Act sought to simplify Medicaid eligibility and provide coverage to all persons with income below 133%/138% of the federal poverty level. The U.S. Supreme Court decision rendered the Medicaid expansion a state option.

**The financial impact of MS on individuals and families can be devastating:**

- Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is typically diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50, when most are raising families, advancing careers, and maximizing their earnings. Yet studies show that only 40% are in the workforce ten years after their diagnosis, and some lost access to employer-based health coverage.

- The average annual cost for someone with MS in the U.S. including both direct and indirect costs (i.e. lost wages) is approximately $69,000. Of this, approximately $39,000 consists of health care costs.

- Seventy percent of persons with MS report difficulty paying for health care, even with health insurance and many are forced to delay doctor visits and split their medication doses or skip them altogether.

**Leveraging federal dollars to provide low-income working Georgians health insurance is a smart investment that could provide up to 650,000 Georgians, including people with MS affordable, comprehensive coverage.**

- Georgia has one of the highest uninsured rates in the country. By extending coverage to 650,000 low-income, uninsured residents, Medicaid expansion will help Georgians get preventative services and will improve health outcomes.

- Medicaid expansion is expected to bring $36 billion in direct federal funds and have a cumulative impact of $72 billion on the Georgia economy over the next 10 years. Since poor health is the most common reason to miss work, and since medical bills are the leading cause of bankruptcy, Medicaid expansion could also play a role in maintaining the health of the workforce, preventing medical bankruptcies, and even preventing related foreclosures.

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