

1 HJR121
2 206659-1
3 By Representatives Coleman and Estes
4 RFD: Rules
5 First Read: 12-MAR-20

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8 EXPRESSING THE INTENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF
9 THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE AND URGING THE GOVERNOR TO IMMEDIATELY
10 EXPAND MEDICAID UNDER THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT IN THE STATE OF
11 ALABAMA IN RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE
12 CURRENT RURAL HEALTH CARE CRISIS.

13
14 WHEREAS, the Alabama Legislature has questioned how
15 to provide comprehensive, quality health care to all
16 Alabamians regardless of income, health status, age, or gender
17 time and time again; and

18 WHEREAS, Alabamians are suffering because of their
19 lack of access to health care; and

20 WHEREAS, in December of 2019, the world was stunned
21 by an outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease in Wuhan, China; and

22 WHEREAS, shortly thereafter on February 4, 2020, the
23 United States government declared the novel coronavirus a
24 public health emergency; and

25 WHEREAS, the United States has 1,109 confirmed cases
26 and 31 deaths reported from the virus as of March 11, 2020;
27 and

1 WHEREAS, in the wake of the current classification
2 of COVID-19 as a pandemic by the World Health Organization, a
3 COVID-19 outbreak in the state of Alabama could be devastating
4 to the state's economy and the health of our citizens; and

5 WHEREAS, by not expanding Medicaid, this ensures
6 that many Alabamians that may become infected will go
7 undiagnosed and untreated; people for whom going to the doctor
8 would result in financial calamity tend not to do so before
9 their health circumstances become dire; and

10 WHEREAS, Alabama's hospitals have experienced
11 millions of dollars of cuts in federal assistance due to the
12 Governor's refusal to expand Medicaid; this has placed a
13 tremendous financial strain on hospitals and resulted in
14 elimination of services, loss of jobs, and even hospital
15 closures, thereby reducing access to care for every Alabamian;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, reducing the number of uninsured patients
18 will keep hospitals open; since 2011, 17 Alabama hospitals
19 have closed, while 88 percent of those remaining rural
20 hospitals are operating in the red, and 75 percent of all
21 Alabama hospitals are operating in the red; these hospitals
22 depend on federal dollars to offset the cost of serving a high
23 proportion of low-income and uninsured patients, however they
24 have suffered due to the state's failure to expand Medicaid;
25 and

26 WHEREAS, approximately 397,000 uninsured Alabamians
27 would be eligible to receive low-cost health insurance, with a

1 majority of these residents employed; covering low-income
2 adults would also reduce the burden of medical debt, now the
3 leading cause of personal bankruptcy; and

4 WHEREAS, according to the Kaiser Foundation, Alabama
5 has the second highest prevalence of heart disease-related
6 deaths in the nation at 224.7 deaths per 100,000 people; and

7 WHEREAS, according to the Kaiser Foundation, Alabama
8 has the fifth highest infant mortality rate in the nation at
9 7.38 deaths per 1,000 live births; and

10 WHEREAS, broader access to health care leads to
11 preventive care, which produces healthier families, a
12 healthier workforce, and an all-around healthier state; with
13 the expansion of Medicaid, hundreds of thousands of Alabamians
14 will have access to preventive care for the first time in
15 their lives, rather than access to acute care only; and

16 WHEREAS, expansion of Medicaid will result in
17 reduced state spending on health care-related services to
18 those previously uninsured residents with incomes below 133
19 percent of the federal poverty limit; and

20 WHEREAS, studies indicate that a one dollar (\$1)
21 increase in federal spending on Medicaid yields an additional
22 65 to 75 cents of economic activity; and

23 WHEREAS, Medicaid expansion would create 30,000 new
24 jobs, \$11.37 billion in increased economic activity in the
25 next three years, and roughly \$3 billion annually thereafter;
26 and

1 WHEREAS, with the additional revenue and economic
2 activity that would be generated from expanding Medicaid, the
3 cost to the State of Alabama would be more than covered; and

4 WHEREAS, thousands of underinsured Alabama veterans
5 would gain health coverage if Alabama closed the health
6 coverage gap; many veterans do not qualify for long-term
7 health benefits; an estimated 13,000 uninsured Alabama
8 veterans and their spouses would gain access to medical
9 insurance coverage by expanding Medicaid; and

10 WHEREAS, closing the coverage gap is a wise
11 investment in Alabama's future; thousands of hardworking
12 people who cannot afford insurance will gain the peace of mind
13 that coverage brings; Alabama businesses stand to gain a more
14 reliable workforce and Alabama's economy stands to gain an
15 infusion of federal dollars, more tax revenues, and thousands
16 of new health care jobs; and

17 WHEREAS, according to the Alabama Health Care
18 Improvement Task Force, Medicaid expansion for less than a
19 dime on the dollar is a bargain that Alabama cannot afford to
20 pass up; and

21 WHEREAS, the Alabama Health Care Improvement Task
22 Force recommended that the Governor and the Legislature move
23 forward at the earliest opportunity to close Alabama's health
24 coverage gap by expanding Medicaid; now therefore,

25 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH
26 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That the members of the Democratic
27 Party urge the Governor of the State of Alabama to expand

1 Medicaid in this state under the Patient Protection and
2 Affordable Care Act to enhance access to health care, promote
3 revenue and economic activity, preserve and create jobs in
4 this state, and protect the wellbeing of the citizens of
5 Alabama.

6 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this
7 resolution be sent to Governor Kay Ivey that she may know of
8 the strong sentiments of the Democratic members of the
9 Legislature concerning this issue.