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Senator Lee Heider

1631 Richmond Drive, Twin Falls, Idaho 83301

Dear Senator Heider,

The Idaho Legislature can and should tackle Medicaid redesign for the 2014 Legislative Session. I ask you to put this important issue on the Legislative agenda for 2014. Your work is not finished until all Idahoans are insured and have equal access to primary health care.

The Supreme Court has ruled that states could opt out of expanding Medicaid. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was designed for the poorest of poor to be covered by Medicaid. As a result of your decision to not expand Medicaid at least 70,000 Idahoans will be left uninsured, including individuals between the ages of 19 and 64 with incomes of less than $15,856 who are not disabled and do not have children.  A family of four earning $32,499 or less would also not have health coverage; many of these families have at least on fulltime wage earner.

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Report “Idaho Medicaid Redesign” March 22, 2013 clearly shows the significant cost savings to Idaho taxpayers if Medicaid were to be expanded to those citizens who qualified. Providing health insurance subsidy or expanding Medicaid coverage to the strata of our Idaho population who fall below the tax credit eligibility minimum is pro-active and cost-effective. This strategy avoids spending millions of tax dollars on the State CAT Fund for catastrophic care for uninsured citizens who require emergency health care due to either true emergencies or due to the fact that they have not been able to access care for chronic health conditions.

Idaho has three years in which the Federal government will pay 90% of the costs to assure citizens who qualify are insured through a Medicaid Redesign plan. The economic benefit to your tax paying constituents is great. The benefit of to those Idahoans who need health care is important to promote the opportunity to be responsible members of our communities, able to participate in the work force, and care for their families.

I urge you to focus on this issue in 2014 and review carefully every possible solution to utilize the Federal funds, to ensure each and every citizen of Idaho has the opportunity to access affordable health care, including providing subsidies if necessary to those who cannot afford health insurance through the health care exchange options. Idaho homeowners and other property tax payers will save $478 million over 10 years if we extend health care coverage to Idaho families earning$26,000 or less a year. There are at least 70,000 Idaho citizens who are uninsured, and cannot afford to purchase health insurance cannot and they should not wait another one or two years. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Maree McHugh MSN, ARNP