

Written Testimony in Support of HB 148

Given on March 26, 2015

*Included:*

Patricia Chesbro – Mat-Su

Delight Rose – Mat-Su

Whitney Lowell

John Murphy

Kendra Higgins, DPT

Lynn Wilbur – Stika

Lisa EaganLagerquist – Douglas

Tara Devlin

Mat-Su Health Foundation

Ernest Suoja – Homer

Mary Lynne Dahl- Ketchikan

The League of Women Voters

Daniel Duque - Anchorage

Lila Hobbs – Anchorage

Mave Alfonsi – Anchorage

Breanna James – Anchorage

## LIO Mat-Su

---

**From:** Patricia Chesbro <chesbro@mtaonline.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 26, 2015 9:03 AM  
**To:** LIO Mat-Su  
**Subject:** I support Medicaid expansion

On a recent visit to the Mat Su Regional Medical Center, I noted that during the last year, charity and uncompensated care amounted to \$34,713,284. Wow! This number is over half the amount spent for salaries and capital improvements at the Center. Just imagine how much would be saved with Medicaid expansion, just at this facility. Expansion will have huge economic benefits. However, the most important benefits is taking care of Alaskans. It is our responsibility as good people to take care of each other. Medicaid expansion makes good economic and compassionate sense! Thank you for listening and acting in a responsible way.

Patricia and James Chesbro  
District 12  
907-376-5433

## LIO Mat-Su

---

**From:** Delight <delight@mtaonline.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 26, 2015 9:51 AM  
**To:** LIO Mat-Su  
**Subject:** Medicaid expansion

Please let our legislators know that we Alaskans (not politicians) WANT medicaid expansion for those who cannot afford what the working wealthy Juneau-ites can afford. There has been nothing but political interests blocking this expansion in the face of facts showing how the expansion will NOT bankrupt Alaska — last administration already did that.

Please move forward with medicaid, take the help from the Federal Government in the interest of real live people who are desperately in need of these services. Show some compassion for your fellow human beings and stop trying to block based on your political biased stubbornness.

Regards,  
Delight Rose  
Palmer, AK

Rep. Paul Seaton  
Alaska Legislature  
State Capitol Rm 102  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Mr. Seaton,

My name is Whitney Lowell. As a life long Alaskan, I am writing in support of medicaid expansion.

I believe medicaid expansion will benefit those in need as well as bring economic growth to our wonderful state. Saying no to 4,000 new jobs & 1.1 billion in new in new federal revenue is not wise. Everyone should have affordable access to healthcare, everyone should be able to get access to preventative care. We can not allow 20,000 Alaskans live with out access to healthcare.

The members of our community that are equal to or below the 138% of the FPL need care & medicaid expansion is the most efficient & economical way to accomplish this. Please vote in support of medicaid expansion.

Sincerely,  
Whitney Lowell

Rep. SEATON  
Alaska Legislature  
State Capitol Room #  
Juneau, AK 99801

3/25/15

Dear Representative Seaton,

I'm writing today in support of Medicaid Expansion for Alaska. As a 28 year old Alaskan, I have many friends who have recently graduated and are getting their first jobs, and would be eligible for Medicaid if expanded. This is an excellent opportunity to provide crucial health insurance to young Alaskans who will soon be fully employed and purchasing private insurance. Medicaid will provide the bridge on their way to better employment and a healthy future.

As you know, from 2016-2021, an investment of \$61 million by Alaska will be matched with \$1.2 billion in federal funding, 95%, for Medicaid expansion.

As the chairman of the committee for health and social services, you have the opportunity to insure 40,000 Alaskans, an opportunity I urge you to accept.

Sincerely,  
JOHN MURPHY



Dear Representative Paul Seaton,

As a lifelong Alaskan, I strongly support Medicaid expansion. I am a practicing physical therapist in Alaska, and my patients' needs come first. Please give my current and potential patients access to coverage so I can help them be healthy, productive, and contributing members of Alaska.

Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Sincerely,

Kendra Higgins, DPT

Rep. Paul Seaton  
Alaska Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 102  
Juneau, AK 99801

**From:** kaleilw . <kalei.lw@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 25, 2015 11:10 AM  
**To:** LIO Sitka  
**Subject:** Medicaid expansion comments today

Please accept my comments for Medicaid expansion as I am unable to present in person.

My name is Lynn Wilbur and I have lived in Sitka Alaska for over 10 years. Before that I lived in Juneau for approximately 10 years. I have worked as a marine biologist, children's counselor, chemical dependency counselor, and I was a manager for a medical specialist in Juneau. I have advocated for veterans, the disabled, and for patients on Medicare and Medicaid in being provided quality care and timely payments to their practitioners. For several years that jobs that I have held provided me with basic health insurance coverage, which was affordable for my employers, although deductibles were frequently quite high for me to pay on the salaries that I received.

At this time, I am a middle aged working student without medical coverage. In the time that I have been in Alaska, I have seen the availability and affordability of health insurance offered by employers in serious decline. I do not have any type of coverage. I understand and have seen the risks and high costs involved when the public does not have access to affordable health coverage, which translates into crisis medicine; emergency room visits, loss of quality of life, insurmountable debt, loss of housing, and even death. There are those that say that access to healthcare is not a right, and I disagree. A society that cares for its members is a society that flourishes, and this is evidenced by a higher quality of life, lower costs and burdens on a society that cares for its underprivileged, and a productive workforce. And if a person has the right to refuse medical care in the event of an emergency, it logically follows that that person has a **right** to medical care.

I am fully in support of Medicaid expansion in the state of Alaska. Thank you.

--

Lynn Wilbur, B.S., PGDipSci, PhD candidate University of Aberdeen  
617 Katlian St., Sitka AK  
(907) 752-0011

To: Elected Officials

From: Lisa EaganLagerquist  
1102 Fifth Street  
Douglas, Alaska

Both my husband and I work full time and recently, as I was removing my sons shirt for swim lessons, I noticed about 10 red chicken pox looking bumps on his back. Not having yet met our deductible and trying to stick to our monthly budget I was reluctant to take him to the doctor since he had no other signs of illness. Luckily for me, as the bumps got worse, I did have the means to take him to the doctor and found out he needed antibiotics. This story ends happily for us, but what about the people who don't have \$150 to spare to go the doctor is get a minor rash checked out? What will happen? They won't go and it will get worse and worse. I have since found out if this rash went untreated it could be deadly.

With Medicaid expansion, thousands of people would finally have access to vaccines, cancer screenings and mental health services, and be able to proactively manage their diabetes, high blood pressure and other chronic conditions. With the federal government willing to fund 90% of this, it is common sense to accept the funds so *all* Alaskans have health insurance coverage.

I want to be part of an Alaska, that takes care of all our people in an economically smart way.

Thanks for taking the time today to hear testimony. Please support the Governor's efforts to expand Medicaid.

Lisa EaganLagerquist




Rep. Seaton  
Alaska Legislature  
State Capitol Rm 102  
Juneau, AK 99801

march 24, 2015

Dear Representative Seaton,

my name is Tara Devlin, a born and raised Alaskan who cares that my state stays both physically and economically healthy. I'm writing in support of Medicaid expansion as I've seen the Levin and Evergreen report, and it's obviously the right choice financially. But the health of myself and my fellow Alaskans is what is close to home. As a new business owner who started half-way through the year it meant that I didn't make enough to qualify for insurance subsidies under Obamacare, but wasn't poor enough for Medicaid. I just need help to get to where I want with my business and can't afford the gut-wrenching high insurance rates in my home state. Thank you for being open to expand Medicaid, and urge you to support our walkers but.

Sincerely, 



March 26, 2015

The Honorable Representative Seaton  
State House of Representatives  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

RE: Support for HB148, for Medicaid Reform and Expansion

Dear Rep. Seaton:

The Mat-Su Health Foundation strongly urges the Alaska Legislature to pass HB148 because it takes steps toward meaningful Medicaid reform for a more sustainable Medicaid program AND also expands Medicaid for the benefit of Alaskans and the Alaska economy. In particular, the MSHF Board supports

- Expanding Medicaid to cover more Mat-Su (and Alaska) residents so they can access care in more cost-effective ways to lead more productive lives.
- Using Medicaid expansion dollars as a catalyst to reform Medicaid to control costs and make the program more sustainable.
- Designing Alaska's Medicaid expansion as a path to self-sufficiency for individuals to ensure they enter or remain in the workforce.
- Building an "opt out" provision into State statute if the federal government reneges on its obligations.

Access to care in the appropriate setting improves health outcomes and controls costs. Hand in hand, reform and expansion can actually improve access to care. MSHF recently published the first report of a Behavioral Health Environmental Scan on the Mat-Su's Behavioral Health Crisis Response System. The report, which includes a "deep dive" on Mat-Su Regional Emergency Department (ED) utilization in 2013, shows that reform measures could control health care expenditures for all payor groups, including Medicaid patients, and Medicaid expansion could prevent costly ED visits by those without insurance coverage.

#### Medicaid Reform

2013 ED charges (not including physician charges) for Medicaid patients totaled \$15.7 million to just the Mat-Su Regional ED. These costs do not include expenses for residents who went directly to Anchorage for care and bypassed the Mat-Su Regional ED. Sixteen percent of all Mat-Su Regional ED visits were made by "high utilizers" who bounced back to the ED five or more times in the same year. Fifty-six percent of all high utilizers presented with behavioral health diagnoses. Of these, 28% were covered by Medicaid. In 2013, 187 Medicaid patients had five or more visits to the Mat-Su Regional ED for any diagnosis. One Medicaid super utilizer patient had 165 visits to the Mat-Su Regional ED in 2013. Clearly, the care of these high utilizers needs to be managed more effectively. Reforms built into HB148 in Section 10 could do this.

When a patient keeps returning to the ED over and over, it is apparent his or her health needs are not being met. Reform measures could institute a shared savings methodology that allowed for care coordination of these patients and incentivized the hospital and its partners to more effectively manage these people in lower cost settings and prevent them from bouncing back. Reforms built into HB148 in Section 10 could do this.



### Medicaid Expansion

Sixteen percent of these high utilizers had no form of reimbursement to seek care upstream in lower cost settings. If a portion of these folks were covered by Medicaid through expansion, they could get access to care in lower cost settings. There are at least 2,150 Mat-Su residents who have some type of mental illness who would be eligible for Medicaid coverage if expanded.

Mat-Su Regional's ED sees *five times* the number of people with behavioral health issues than our community mental health center. The Mat-Su population nearly doubled from 50,000 people to 98,000 people since 2000 but Mat-Su's community mental health center grants from the Department of Behavioral Health stayed flat. State funding mechanisms for this safety net population literally drove people to seek care in the ED instead of in lower cost settings. Instead of getting care in a timely way from our community mental health center, these folks delayed care until it was a crisis and presented to the ED. Because they couldn't pay the bill for those ED services, the ED recoups those dollars by cost-shifting to other payors and the public.

Medicaid expansion would improve access to care for these behavioral health issues and prevent costly ED visits. Medicaid expansion would reduce this cost-shifting and help lower healthcare costs across the system. Medicaid reform would ensure that we manage our costs and prevent unnecessary and preventable ED visits through care coordination. HB148 takes steps in the right direction to pair meaningful reform measures with expansion to improve access to care and reduce costs. MSHF endorses HB148.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ripley  
Executive Director  
Mat-Su Health Foundation

March 27, 2015

Alaska House of Representatives - *House Health & Social Services Cmte.*

Medicaid Expansion Bill HB 148

Title: Urging the Alaska Legislature to Expand Medicaid Coverage

As President of the Homer Senior Citizens, Inc., I am very concerned about recent Medicaid Waiver denials. Due to the State overbooking hearings, one resident has been waiting over three months for a resolution to a Medicaid denial. In the meantime, services are not being paid and this results in a large account balance due if the State continues to deny a waiver for needed services.

These denials are putting seniors and families in extremely difficult situations. There are two residents who were denied after many years of being eligible for a Medicaid Waiver. I understand that this is a statewide issue. Could these denials be a thing of the past if we had Medicaid Expansion?

Medicaid expansion will affect our employees, residents, family members, friends and neighbors by having the opportunity to gain health coverage resulting in improved preventive and primary care access.

Expansion would bring in federal revenue, create jobs, improve the economy, cut state spending and would lay the groundwork for healthy happy Alaskans.

Yes there are some stipulations to be met, but in all it is a win-win for Alaska especially in preparing for the Silver Tsunami.

Please put all differences aside and Expand Medicaid coverage. (Get it done.)

Respectfully submitted,

  
Ernest Suoja

Homer, Alaska

**LIO Ketchikan**

---

**From:** Mary Lynne Dahl <dahlfacemld@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 27, 2015 3:19 PM  
**To:** LIO Ketchikan  
**Subject:** Medicaid HB148

I urge our legislators to accept Federal Medicaid funding and work hard to reform Medicaid in Alaska. It is past time to act on this .

Mary Lynne Dahl  
Ketchikan , Alaska

# The League of Women Voters

P.O. Box 90079, Anchorage, AK 99509-0079

March 9, 2015

## OFFICERS

Dear State of Alaska Legislators:

### President

Pat Redmond

### Vice-President

Carol Dickason

### Past President

Linda Witt

### Treasurer

Shari George

### Secretary

Hetty Barthel

## DIRECTORS

Judy Andree

Gail Knopf

Diane Mathisen

Marianne Mills

Lois Pillifant


The League of Women Voters of Alaska fully supports the expansion of Medicaid. The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) has long fought for basic health care for all citizens, stating the following in their Position Statement on Health Care: "Every U. S. resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care and mental health care." The League also supports cost control efforts for health care that would go hand-in-hand with universal coverage as well as equity in the allocation of health care resources.


The State of Alaska has an opportunity to expand Medicaid at no immediate cost to the State through the federal Affordable Care Act. Reports from Alaska's own Department of Health and Social Services state that an expanded Medicaid program would save the State millions of dollars in Medicaid payments, reduce the number of missed work days, and bring 4000 new jobs to the State. These new jobs would come with \$1.2 billion in wages. All of these projections bring positive results to the citizens of Alaska. Expanding Medicaid seems like a wise choice for the entire State.

In addition, expansion of Medicaid would help up to 42,000 of the State's most vulnerable citizens. There is no more honorable cause for a free and democratic government than to assist the most vulnerable of its citizens. We urge all Senators and Representatives to expand access to quality health care for all Alaskans through Medicaid expansion. We are attaching the full LWVUS Position Statement for your reference.

Thank you for your service to Alaska.

Sincerely,

  
Pat Redmond, President  
League of Women Voters of Alaska

  
Judy Andree, Chair  
LWVAK Legislative Action

cc: Governor Bill Walker, Lt. Governor Byron Mallott, DHSS Commissioner Valerie Davidson



## **The League of Women Voters of the United States: Position on Health Care**

**GOALS:** The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all U.S. residents. Other U.S. health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care, advancement of medical research and technology, and a reasonable total national expenditure level for health care.

**BASIC LEVEL OF QUALITY CARE:** Every U.S. resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care and mental health care. Dental, vision and hearing care also are important but lower in priority. The League believes that under any system of health care reform, consumers/patients should be permitted to purchase services or insurance coverage beyond the basic level.

**FINANCING AND ADMINISTRATION:** The League favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums. As the United States moves toward a national health insurance plan, an employer-based system of health care reform that provides universal access is acceptable to the League. The League supports administration of the U.S. health care system either by a combination of the private and public sectors or by a combination of federal, state and/or regional government agencies. The League is opposed to a strictly private market-based model of financing the health care system. The League also is opposed to the administration of the health care system solely by the private sector or the states.

**TAXES:** The League supports increased taxes to finance a basic level of health care for all U.S. residents, provided health care reforms contain effective cost control strategies.

**COST CONTROL:** The League believes that efficient and economical delivery of care can be enhanced by such cost control methods as:

- ✧ the reduction of administrative costs,
- ✧ regional planning for the allocation of personnel, facilities and equipment,
- ✧ the establishment of maximum levels of public reimbursement to providers,
- ✧ malpractice reform,
- ✧ the use of managed care,
- ✧ utilization review of treatment,
- ✧ mandatory second opinions before surgery or extensive treatment,
- ✧ consumer accountability through deductibles and copayments.

**EQUITY ISSUES:** The League believes that health care services could be more equitably distributed by:

- ✧ allocating medical resources to underserved areas,
- ✧ providing for training health care professionals in needed fields of care,
- ✧ standardizing basic levels of service for publicly funded health care programs,
- ✧ requiring insurance plans to use community rating instead of experience rating,
- ✧ establishing insurance pools for small businesses and organizations.

**ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES TO INDIVIDUALS:** The League believes that the ability of a patient to pay for services should not be a consideration in the allocation of health care resources. Limited resources should be allocated based on the following criteria considered together: the urgency of the medical condition, the life expectancy of the patient, the expected outcome of the treatment, the cost of the procedure, the duration of care, the quality of life of the patient after treatment, and the wishes of the patient and the family.

(Source: League of Women Voters of the United States. Impact on Issues: 2012-2014. Online.  
<http://lwv.org/content/health-care>)

Dear Rep Paul Seaton,

Please support the Governor's Medicaid reform  
and expansion bill.

**It's the Right  
Thing to Do!**

Daniel Duque

(Name)

1945 Karluk St Apt 3

(Address)

Anch, AK 99501

(City, State, Zip)

B07322.16

stamps.com

\$1  
US PC  
FIRST  
062S0001  
FRO



Rep Paul Seaton

State Capitol, Rm 102

Juneau, AK 99801



Dear Representative Seaton,

Please support the Governor's Medicaid reform  
and expansion bill.

**It's the Right  
Thing to Do!**

Lila Hobbs

(Name)

525 W. 3rd Ave Apt 604

(Address)

Anchorage, AK 99501

(City, State, Zip)

B07313.02

USPS  
Stamps

**\$0.34**

US POSTAGE  
FIRST-CLASS  
062S000910902  
FROM 99501



Rep. Seaton  
Alaska Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 11

Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Rep Paul Seaton

Please support the Governor's Medicaid reform  
and expansion bill.

**It's the Right  
Thing to Do!**

Marie Alfonsi

(Name)

841 Shakespeare Circle

(Address)

Anchorage, AK 99503

(City, State, Zip)

B07312.23

USPS  
Stamps

**\$0.34**

US POSTAGE  
FIRST-CLASS  
062S000910902  
FROM 99501



Rep Paul Seaton  
Alaska Legislature  
State Capitol Room 102  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Rep Paul Seaton,

Please support the Governor's Medicaid reform  
and expansion bill.

# It's the Right Thing to Do!

Breanna James

(Name)

1517 Repner Dr.

(Address)

Anchorage, AK 99504

(City, State, Zip)



Rep. Paul Seaton

Alaska Legislature

State Capitol Rm 102

Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Paul Seaton,

Please support the Governor's Medicaid reform  
and expansion bill.

# It's the Right Thing to Do!

Whitney Lowell

(Name)

1900 K St.

(Address)

Anchorage, AK 99503

(City, State, Zip)



Paul Seaton

Alaska Legislature

State Capitol Rm 102

Juneau, AK 99801