

March 26, 2015

House Health & Social Services Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Members of the House Health & Social Services Committee:

I am writing to urge your support for HB 148, **"An Act relating to medical assistance reform measures; relating to eligibility for medical assistance coverage; relating to medical assistance cost containment measures by the Department of Health and Social Services; and providing for an effective date."**

According to a March 23rd article in USA Today, hospitals in states that expanded Medicaid to their poorest residents faced about \$5 billion less in unpaid bills last year — about twice the reduction as those that did not expand this health care coverage, according to a new federal report.

A March 23, US News and World Report story publicized the finding of a new study that the number of people with newly diagnosed diabetes increased by 23 percent in states that expanded the number of low-income people who are eligible for Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

To date, 29 states have expanded health coverage through Medicaid for their citizens. Alaska lawmakers should quickly do the same and take advantage of this important opportunity to improve the health and productivity of our families and workforce while saving state budget dollars and bringing our federal tax dollars home to work for Alaskans. Legislators can do what's right for Alaska. Pass Governor Walker's bill to expand eligibility for Medicaid to 138 percent of the federal poverty level as called for in the Affordable Care Act.

I make a final plea: please keep our politics local. The Alaska Legislature invited Americans for Prosperity, fronted by the billionaire Koch brothers, to make the case against expanding Medicaid to Alaska's most marginalized citizens. This is insulting. The Kochs' have received more than \$12 million in state and federal subsidies for their 200,000-acre cattle ranch in Montana, alone. There's something wrong with the legislative process when we're seeking advice from two billionaires who have no qualms about taking subsidies for themselves while trying to block our poorest citizens from getting assistance for medical care.

Medicaid expansion is ethically and morally the right thing to do. It is also the smart thing to do economically. I urge you to pass this bill and do what's right for Alaskans.

Sincerely,

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