

# TOP 10 Reasons to Extend Medicaid to Those Who Qualify

By Rich Huddleston, executive director of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

**1** It's the right thing to do. More than 240,000 Arkansas uninsured adults will now have health care coverage. Without it, low-income, uninsured adults who are currently not eligible for Medicaid will have no health care coverage option.

**2** 80,000 uninsured Arkansas parents below 138 percent of poverty (\$31,800 for a family of four) will now have health care coverage. Parents won't have to choose (at least not as often) between meeting the basic economic needs of their kids or paying for their own health care.

**3** Arkansas can continue to be a leader in ensuring health care coverage for kids. Covering parents means more already-eligible kids will enroll in ARKids First, thus reducing the number of uninsured children.\*

**4** It will help protect Arkansas workers against preventable illnesses, result in a healthier and more productive workforce for Arkansas employers, and improve our economic competitiveness.

**5** It's a good deal for Arkansas. The federal government will pick up the full cost of coverage for newly-eligible adults for three years and most of the cost (90 percent) in years after that.

**6** States that have extended Medicaid coverage to adults have seen fewer deaths - especially those caused by disease, accidents, injuries, and drug abuse. Arkansas could see 1,100 fewer deaths per year by strengthening Medicaid.\*\*

**7** Covering more adults will save Arkansas money by reducing emergency room costs, uncompensated care costs for hospitals, and state spending on the uninsured and the medically needy.† DHS estimates total savings of \$630 million the first eight years.

**8** Ensuring low-income Arkansans have Medicaid to pay for their care helps rural hospitals stay afloat. It helps close the gap caused by hundreds of millions of dollars in uncompensated care each year.

**9** Extending Medicaid coverage to those who qualify means more of our federal tax dollars will stay right here in Arkansas. Declining this opportunity will not reduce the federal debt. Arkansas tax dollars will simply be spent in New York or California.

**10** The savings Arkansas sees from extending Medicaid will help close a budget shortfall and prevent cuts to the existing Medicaid program including nursing home care, adult dental coverage, and provider rate decreases.

\* <http://ccf.georgetown.edu/ccf-resources/medicaid-coverage-parents-the-affordable-care-act/>

\*\* <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa1202099>, <http://www.achi.net/MiscDocs/130103RAND%20Final.pdf>.

† An example of state spending on the uninsured is community mental health centers. The medically needy program in Medicaid allows those with high medical costs who don't qualify for Medicaid to "spend down" their income on medical bills to qualify.