

Faith leaders urge Ohio lawmakers to expand Medicaid

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As provisions of the Affordable Care Act go into effect, governors around the nation are considering whether their states should opt in to the Medicaid expansion provision of the law.

Ohio Governor John Kasich has been opposed to the Affordable Care Act, in particular its mandatory coverage component. But after considering the benefits to Ohio from the Medicaid expansion provision, he decided to include it last month in his proposed two-year state budget.

Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faith leaders held a press conference at the Ohio Statehouse on Tuesday to urge the Ohio General Assembly to approve Governor Kasich's plan to expand Medicaid eligibility. About 90 people were in attendance.

"We believe that part of our responsibility is to see to it that all of our neighbors have access to adequate, high-quality health care," said United Methodist Bishop Gregory Palmer. "We're here also to express our solidarity and our sense of faith and admiration for the Governor, who has made a courageous and bold move in saying that the state of Ohio ought to be a part of the expansion of Medicaid."

Medicaid expansion would "increase access to health care coverage to hundreds of thousands of uninsured Ohioans," said Jim Tobin, Director of Social Concerns for the Catholic Conference of Ohio. "This will strengthen the health care safety net, while adding value to the overall delivery of Ohio's Medicaid services."

"In our Jewish tradition, we understand that providing health care is not only an obligation for an individual doctor, but for society as well," said Rabbi Misha Zinkow of Temple Israel in Columbus.

"Everyone wins with this expansion," said Rev. Timothy Ahrens, Senior Pastor at First Congregational Church in Columbus. "We deeply appreciate that Governor Kasich has stepped forward to lead in this effort by including the expansion of Medicaid in his state budget."

Longer excerpts from faith leaders who spoke at the press conference accompany the list of photos in this article (click **View the list** above or below).

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