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Kasich Urges Support For Medicaid Expansion, Asks Advocates To Lobby Lawmakers

[Gov. John Kasich](#) joined a slew of health care advocates Thursday to once again publicly push support for his proposed Medicaid expansion plan and rally proponents to step up their lobbying efforts in the General Assembly.

Advocates, many of whom testified in favor of the executive budget proposal ([HB 59](#)) in the related Health and Human Services Subcommittee's final hearing Thursday, crowded the Riffe Center for the afternoon event.

Similar to his State of the State address, the governor used his speech to stress the role his faith has played in making the decision to support expanding Medicaid coverage, as well as to tout the expected benefits of such an expansion.

"This is a big human thing, that's what it is," he said. "And that's why I don't need anything other than for all of us to put our hearts together and our minds together and just be good people the lord can be proud of."

According to the governor, his administration first began looking at expansion a year ago, and after weighing the facts and individuals it would impact, decided to help provide more coverage.

"It doesn't take a lot of courage to that decide you're going to help people," Gov. Kasich said. "If I didn't do that when I could, then I'd be really blind to things that I really, strongly believe in."

With the Statehouse in the background of Gov. Kasich's remarks, he urged advocates, lawmakers and Ohio residents to put aside partisan politics and focus on the human impact this coverage change will have across the state.

"I think...with intensity, but kindness, but with firmness that cannot be shunned aside, we have to go over to that building and we have to talk to the people that represent us one-on-one," he said. "And we have to let them know that if they stand and support these programs, for those folks who live in the shadows, for those that sleep under bridges at night...that when they stand with us we're not going to ignore them."

Specifically, the governor said the state needs to address the issues faced by the working poor who can't afford private health insurance offered by their employers or aren't even offered coverage. Likewise, Ohio needs to do more to help individuals struggling from substance abuse get treatment and access services.

"The purpose of that addiction treatment is to get people out of that living hell," the governor said, adding that substance abuse can affect individuals from all different backgrounds and socioeconomic status.

Other benefits of expanding Medicaid, Gov. Kasich said, include keeping taxpayer dollars in Ohio, cutting down on emergency room and uncompensated care cost and capitalizing on new jobs.

Citing concerns over the national deficit, however, the governor cautioned against federal entitlement spending, saying that the "continued direction for Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security is not sustainable-it's not going to work."

With this in mind, he urged Medicaid expansion supporters to remember these concerns in the future.

"When the discussion begins about how we transform these programs, don't be out there holding the sign...protesting me because I say it has to happen," Gov. Kasich said. "One of the things that has to happen in Ohio, and in the country, is that its self-interest is not acceptable...and we have to work together."

The governor, however, emphasized that these concerns should not stop the state from moving forward with expanding Medicaid, which he said will allow Ohio to recapture taxpayer dollars to be spent at home and not on some failed weapons project.

He said he looks forward to signing a budget bill that will allow Ohio to "continue to help people who have been left behind."

"Every single human being is equal in the eyes of the lord," Gov. Kasich said. "I don't care if they're living under the bridge, or whether they're living in the biggest house or the greatest mansion, we've got to treat everybody equal."

Prior to the governor's comments, supporters including law enforcement officials, physicians, family members and faith leaders also spoke in support of Medicaid expansion. Likewise, administration officials also attended the rally, coordinated by the Coalition for Healthy Communities, to reaffirm their support for the governor's proposal.

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