

## Coalition endorses Kasich's Medicaid expansion

02.09.13 - 01:00 am

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On Friday, the Scioto County Health Coalition unanimously voted to endorse Gov. Kasich's plan to expand Medicaid in Ohio.

Kasich released his plan Monday along with this proposal for a \$63.3 billion 2014-2015 state budget.

Kasich's plan would expand Medicaid eligibility to Ohioans earning up to 138 percent of federal poverty level (about \$15,400 per person). But the extension comes with a condition: If the federal government fails to cover the bulk of the costs, as it has promised, the state will reverse course.

"We are going to extend Medicaid to the working poor and to those who are jobless trying to find work," Kasich said.

Kasich's budget summary says the expansion of Medicaid makes financial sense for the state as long as the federal government picks up most of the tab. As part of the Affordable Care Act, the federal government takes all the costs for newly insured Medicaid recipients for the first three years. After that, the federal government's share is brought down to 95 percent and ultimately phased down to 90 percent.

The idea for the health coalition's endorsement of the plan came from Compass Community Health CEO, Ed Hughes.

"For a number of years we've lived with the reality that some of the unhealthiest folks in our community are unable to access health care services because they are uninsured. The Medicaid expansion will create a pathway for them to be able to access what we think is a very well developed system in our community, between primary care, hospitals and clinics that are available," Hughes said. "There is likely 20 percent of our citizens that cannot access the services we have and this Medicaid expansion will create that opportunity."

Hughes said the Medicaid expansion has the potential to be a good thing for the area. He said it's also an economic development issue.

"If we are able to provide health care services to those people then health care services will have to expand to meet that need and that could mean additional jobs," Hughes said.

When asked what an endorsement like this says to the governor, Hughes said he hoped it conveyed gratitude.

"We're hoping it says a big thank you to the governor who has stepped out and shown the courage to be able to say this is good for our state," Hughes said. "The affordable care act and healthcare is in a major

state of flux and change. A lot of people have gone to different corners and are either in opposition or support.”

According to Hughes, this area is one that stands to be most positively impacted by the changes.

“We fit the profile of a community that could be most effected in a positive way because our health care indices are the worst, we have a lot of unemployment and we have a lot of poverty. We can’t improve these health care indices if a person can’t get to the doctor,” he said.

Kasich’s plan will be presented to the Ohio legislature for consideration.

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