

Public Comments Overwhelmingly Favor Medicaid Expansion as Part of North Carolina’s Medicaid Reform

Medicaid is the state program, jointly funded by the federal government, that provides health insurance to North Carolinians in poverty. Historically, Medicaid has covered fewer than half of people in poverty, but the Affordable Care Act offers to pay most of the cost of expanding Medicaid, so that it can reach everyone near poverty.

So far, the state’s legislative leaders have declined this expansion. Instead, they are reforming existing Medicaid by contracting its services to private managed care organizations. Doing so in the manner proposed requires federal approval known as a “waiver.”

In June of 2016, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services submitted a “waiver” application to the federal government, which was then available for public comment.ⁱ The waiver proposal did not mention the possibility of expanding Medicaid. However, in January 2017, newly elected Governor Roy Cooper submitted a revision to the waiver proposal, which includes Medicaid expansion along with managed care reform.

Prior to submitting this revision, the governor sought public comments on the expansion proposal. However, many members of the public have previously commented on Medicaid expansion, in response to the state’s initial waiver application, in 2016. This Fact Sheet reports on the extent to which public comments on the managed care waiver proposal favor or disfavor Medicaid expansion.

Public Comments on Medicaid Expansion

FOR: 256

AGAINST: 1

Analyzing the 2016 public comments, it is evident that those who commented on expansion overwhelmingly favor Medicaid expansion as part of managed care reforms to Medicaid. There were 257 comments to the initial waiver proposal that discussed Medicaid expansion. The commentators were generally identifiable as health professionals, public benefit recipients, or citizens. Health professionals submitted a third of these comments, 5 percent came from Medicaid recipients, and the remaining 60 percent of comments came from the general public.

Of the 257 comments that mentioned Medicaid expansion, only one commenter was against expansion. The other 256 comments were in favor of expansion. Additionally, 137 pro-expansion commentators (54%) were against the Medicaid waiver submitted to CMS, while 117 comments exclusively discussed Medicaid expansion, making no mention of the waiver.

In sum, even though the original waiver proposal in 2016 did not address Medicaid expansion, 257 people who submitted public comments chose to address expansion. Among those many comments, all but one supported expansion, either as part of managed care reforms, or apart from such reforms.

ⁱ <https://public.medicaid.gov/connect.ti/public.comments/view?objectId=1886531>