



Senator David Lucas
Co-Chair, Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee
305-A Coverdell Legislative Office Bldg.
Atlanta, GA 30334

Representative Terry England
Co-Chair, Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee
245 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Submitted via email: tarikajackson@senate.ga.gov, englandhomeport2@windstream.net,
emily.patillo@house.ga.gov

November 13, 2014

Re: Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee

Dear Senator Lucas and Representative England:

Thank you for your commendable service on the Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee. We are writing on behalf of the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, Georgia Watch, Georgians for a Healthy Future, Families First, and eleven additional organizations. All of these organizations are committed to ensuring access to quality, affordable health care for all Georgians. As such, we have been monitoring the Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee meetings and wish to supply some input to help in your efforts to find solutions for rural hospitals in Georgia.

We encourage the Committee to consider recommending to the Governor and the Georgia Legislature that they accept federal funding to expand Medicaid eligibility to Georgia's poor and low-income adults. Georgia's rural hospitals are struggling under the burden of uncompensated care, the uncertainty of impending Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) payment cuts, and other policies that make it hard to operate competitively. By expanding Medicaid eligibility, and thus providing more than 400,000 Georgians with health insurance, rural hospitals would be able to collect compensation for the care that they are currently providing to their patients at no cost. Hospital revenue would increase, off-setting the need for DSH payments. The additional income would boost hospital revenues, thus strengthening the financial situations of rural hospitals and Georgia's health care system as a whole. Hospitals in states that have expanded their Medicaid programs are already reaping the benefits of expansion, including large savings in uncompensated care costs and more robust revenues. Closing the coverage gap by expanding Medicaid eligibility is an important part of maintaining the vital health care infrastructure in rural Georgia. Please find attached our full report.

Thank you for considering consumer input in the Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee's work. We share the Committee's goal of supporting and stabilizing rural hospitals so that all Georgians have access

to health care close to home. We hope that the Committee will recommend the expansion of Medicaid eligibility as a strategy for saving Georgia's rural hospitals.

Sincerely,



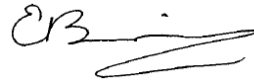
Tim Sweeney
Senior Healthcare Analyst
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute



Beth Stephens
Health Access Program Director
Georgia Watch



Cindy Zeldin
Executive Director
Georgians for a Healthy Future



Elise Blasingame
Director of Community Education
Georgia Watch



Laura Colbert
Community Outreach Manager
Georgians for a Healthy Future

Linda Lowe
Public Policy Advocate
Families First

Dorothy Leone-Glasser
Executive Director
Advocates for Responsible Care

Kim Anderson
Chief Executive Officer
Families First

Jeff Graham
Executive Director
Georgia Equality

Larry Pellegrini
Executive Director
Georgia Rural Urban Summit

Diandra Barber
Executive Director
HealthSTAT

Elizabeth Poythress
President
League of Women Voters

Sheila Ryan
State Director
March of Dimes

Sarah Schwartz
Executive Director
Mental Health America of Georgia



Tamieka Atkins
Chapter Director
National Domestic Workers Alliance - Atlanta
Chapter

Patricia Puckett
Executive Director
Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia

Linda Ellis
Executive Director
The Health Initiative

Marilyn Ringstaff
CEO, CMN
Women of W.O.R.T.H.

Enclosed: Strengthening Georgia's Rural Hospitals and Increasing Access to Care: recommendations from Georgia consumer and community groups

cc: Commissioner Clyde Reese
Members of the Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee
Scheduled presenters at the November 20, 2014 scheduled meeting of the Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee