



**National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society**

## Medicaid Expansion

**Position:** Leveraging federal dollars to provide health insurance to low-income Alabamians is a smart investment that could provide up to 435,000 individuals, including people with MS, affordable, comprehensive coverage.

### Medicaid

Medicaid provides health coverage to nearly 9 million non-elderly individuals with disabilities. It offers prescription drug coverage and standard medical benefits like physician and hospital care; home- and community-based services that allow people with MS to remain independent and avoid premature admission to costlier institutional facilities; and other forms of long-term services and support.

### Medicaid Expansion

The Affordable Care Act sought to simplify Medicaid eligibility and provide coverage to all persons with income below 138 percent of the federal poverty level. A recent U.S. Supreme Court decision rendered the Medicaid expansion an option at the discretion of the state.

### Medicaid Expansion in Alabama

- Total enrollment: 827,523 (2015)
- Current amount of federal aid available to Alabama: 4.5 billion over the next three years
- Cost to Alabama over the first three years of the program: \$0

- ❖ Multiple Sclerosis (MS) typically is diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50, when most are raising families, advancing careers and maximizing their earnings.
- ❖ MS experts recommend people living with MS should begin treatment with one of the disease-modifying medications as soon as possible. Benefits of these medications may include:
  - Reduction in numbers of new lesions;
  - Reduction in the number of exacerbations (also called relapses, attacks, flare-ups);
  - **Reduction in progression of disability; and**
  - **Probable reduction in future disease activity and improvement in quality of life.**
- ❖ **The financial impact of MS on individuals and families can be devastating.** Seventy percent of persons with MS report difficulty paying for health care, even with health insurance, and many are forced to delay doctor visits and split their medication doses or skip them altogether.
- ❖ In 2014, 68% of the states that expanded Medicaid had percentage declines in disability claims greater than 10%. Arkansas and Kentucky saw declines of disability claims of 16.8% and 15.0% respectively.
- ❖ People in expansion states no longer have to apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) to get Medicaid. In addition, experts say that being able to access treatment for mental or physical health issues with newly acquired Medicaid coverage means more people can stay in the workforce.

For more information, please contact Tyler Lamb, Advocacy Manager, Southeast Region [tyler.lamb@nmss.org](mailto:tyler.lamb@nmss.org) or 303-698-6100 x15976