

## Medicaid expansion benefits people with disabilities

By Kendra A. Burgess

“One in four U.S. adults – 61 million Americans – have a disability that impacts major life activities,” according to a 2016 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

From classes in life skills to job training programs, [The Whole Person](#)’s mission is to help people with disabilities in Kansas and Missouri live more independently.

Unfortunately, the same systemic shortfall that forces those in the health insurance coverage gap to choose between doctor visits and feeding their families also impacts people with disabilities.

This essentially locks them into poverty to maintain eligibility for Medicaid coverage or wading through the lengthy process of awaiting a disability determination before getting medical coverage through Social Security Supplemental Income.

However, there is a better way, through Medicaid expansion – a path that 36 states have already taken, and which Missouri voters will have the chance to approve through the Amendment 2 Question in the August 4, 2020 statewide primary election.

Medicaid expansion acts as an employment incentive for people with disabilities - and a needed investment in our Missouri workforce. By increasing the individual income eligibility limit up to about \$18,000 per year, roughly 230,000 Missourians living in rural and metropolitan areas will access coverage through Medicaid expansion. Among those with disabilities, research shows higher employment rates in Medicaid expansion states versus those in non-expansion states.

Missourians are already paying for Medicaid expansion. We just are not getting any of the benefits right now. **Our tax dollars are going to other states, like New York and California that have already expanded Medicaid, instead of helping people here in Missouri.**

During the current global pandemic, The Whole Person continues to safely provide home health care services for seniors and people with disabilities. Assistance with medical needs or activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, and eating allows seniors to age in place and gives people with disabilities the freedom to live and work in the community with dignity.

We rely on home caregivers who provide these services for the community. Yet, too many of the same home caregivers who provide these essential services also fall into the coverage gap, earning too much to qualify for Medicaid and too little to afford private insurance.



It is only fair home health workers are given the means to care for their own health, which they risk as they continue to care for our most vulnerable populations. Medicaid expansion would provide greater access for home health care workers to receive coverage.

The financial burden of our healthcare system should not solely rest on the backs of employers and people should not suffer inhumanely just because their job does not come with health insurance.

With a little help, people with disabilities can work, play, travel, learn, innovate, serve, and thrive in their communities. Home and community-based services have shown to improve health outcomes for people with disabilities; they also help to save the state the cost of providing those services.

People with disabilities are the largest minority group in America, and anyone can join at any time. We each have a shared interest in removing barriers to affordable healthcare for those in our most vulnerable populations.

True to the disability community's independent living philosophy that states, "nothing about us, without us," this decision to expand Medicaid now rests with Missouri voters.

The mission of The Whole Person is to promote independence for people with disabilities, and Medicaid expansion does just that by securing a more equitable Missouri for all.

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