

Press Release

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Impact of Supreme Court Medicaid Decision Analyzed in New Report *Community health center capacity to serve new patients could drop by 5.3 million*

WASHINGTON and NEW YORK – A new report, released today by the Geiger Gibson/RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative, analyzes the impact on community health centers of states’ refusal to implement the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). “How the Supreme Court’s Medicaid Decision May Affect Health Centers: An Early Estimate,” confirms an earlier finding that if fully implemented by the states, the Medicaid expansion will enable community health center capacity to nearly double, and reach approximately 19.8 million new patients. Conversely, without a full Medicaid expansion, the authors find capacity to serve additional patients would be reduced by nearly 27 percent, a 5.3 million decrease in new patients served.

The nation’s federally funded health centers are the principal source of primary health care for medically underserved populations. In CY 2011, more than 1,200 health centers, operating in more than 8,500 urban and rural locations, served 20.2 million patients, 36 percent of whom were uninsured and 93 percent of whom had family incomes below twice the federal poverty level. Federal grants provide core support to health centers, but Medicaid represents the largest single health center financing mechanism, accounting for 39 percent of revenues.

Authors found that the loss of health center capacity would affect the insured as well as uninsured in medically underserved areas. Of the new patients at risk for losing services should states reject expansion funding, less than half (44 percent) would be those covered under Medicaid. More than half (55 percent) would be either uninsured, covered by Medicare, or covered through their employers or state health insurance Exchanges.

The United States Supreme Court’s Medicaid holding in *NFIB v Sebelius* has the potential to limit the impact of the ACA Medicaid expansion, by barring the HHS Secretary from withholding current Medicaid funding from states that fail to cover the expansion population.

“The decision by a state not to expand Medicaid will not only limit access to care for those who would have been covered under the program, but could also limit access to care for those *with* insurance coverage. Without the increased Medicaid revenues, health centers will not be able to serve as many patients in medically underserved areas,” said Associate Research Professor, Katherine Jett Hayes, J.D., one of the report’s authors.

"Health centers' momentum to serve 40 million low-income patients by 2019 very much depends on states' implementation of the ACA's Medicaid coverage expansion. For example, Florida's and Texas' early decision to opt out could reduce health center capacity by nearly 838,000 patients," noted Associate Professor Peter Shin, Ph.D, M.P.H., the report's co-author.

In the 10 states whose Governors had most clearly indicated by mid-July 2012 that they did not intend to implement the Medicaid expansions, new health center patient care capacity would decline by more than 1.5 million patients, from nearly 8.3 million patients served by 2019 to 6.8 million.

Julio Bellber, president and CEO of the RCHN Community Health Foundation, said, "The decision by any state to reject funding for the expansion of Medicaid could have a profound and lasting effect, by limiting the ability of health centers to serve their communities as well as reducing job opportunities."

To access the policy research brief, click here:

http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/departments/healthpolicy/dhp_publications/pub_uploads/dhpPublication_9BB1853A-5056-9D20-3D3DCBB99318306E.pdf

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About the Geiger Gibson / RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative

The Geiger Gibson Program in Community Health Policy, established in 2003 and named after human rights and health center pioneers Drs. H. Jack Geiger and Count Gibson, is part of the School of Public Health and Health Services at The George Washington University. It focuses on the history and contributions of health centers and the major policy issues that affect health centers, their communities, and the patients that they serve. Additional information about the Research Collaborative can be found online at www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/departments/healthpolicy/ggprogram or at rchnfoundation.org.

About the RCHN Community Health Foundation

The RCHN Community Health Foundation, founded in October 2005, is a not-for-profit foundation whose mission is to support community health centers through strategic investment, outreach, education, and cutting-edge health policy research. The only foundation in the country dedicated to community health centers, the Foundation builds on health centers' 40-year commitment to the provision of accessible, high quality, community-based healthcare services for underserved and medically vulnerable populations. The Foundation's gift to the Geiger Gibson program supports health center research and scholarship. For more information on RCHN CHF, visit www.rchnfoundation.org.

About the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services:

Established in July 1997, the School of Public Health and Health Services brought together three longstanding university programs in the schools of medicine, business, and education that we have since expanded substantially. Today, more than 1,100 students from nearly every U.S. state and more than 40 nations pursue undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral-level degrees in public health. Our student body is one of the most ethnically diverse among the nation's private schools of public health. <http://sphhs.gwumc.edu/>