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Close the Gap Idaho Calls on Legislature to Implement Medicaid Expansion

Experts say the most cost-effective way to bring healthcare to 62,000 Idahoans is through unmodified implementation.

BOISE, ID – In a press conference today, the Close the Gap Idaho network called on Idaho legislators to implement Proposition 2, the Medicaid expansion ballot initiative. Medicaid proponents say the most cost-effective way to bring healthcare to 62,000 Idahoans is through unmodified Medicaid expansion. The ballot initiative was passed by 61% of Idaho voters in the November election and became law on November 20, 2018.

In his State of the State address today, Governor Brad Little called on the Idaho Legislature to implement Medicaid expansion by allocating the state's share of the program. Accounting for savings and offsets, the state is projecting a first-year cost of \$10.8 million to cover the 62,000 Idahoans who are currently without access to affordable healthcare.

"Today, Governor Little announced a budget recommendation to implement Medicaid expansion in a fiscally conservative way, carving out savings from other parts of the budget to fund the up-front investment. We applaud the Governor for his commitment to implementing the will of the voters and encourage the legislature to do it the Idaho way, with the lightest possible touch and minimal bureaucracy," said Lauren Necochea, Director of Idaho Voices for Children.

Once fully implemented, Medicaid expansion will bring nearly \$400 million in federal money back to Idaho and save taxpayer money by eliminating duplicative programs and reducing uncompensated care. Expansion is also projected to create 5,000 new jobs and generate more than \$700 million in economic activity, annually.

"As a physician, I have seen firsthand the tough choices some of my patients have to make when it comes to paying for needed healthcare and providing for their families," said Dr. Steve Montamat, M.D. The speedy implementation of Medicaid

expansion, without harmful barriers to coverage, will ensure that my patients are able to access preventive healthcare, avoid delaying necessary treatment, and afford needed medications. Investing in their health will allow them to continue working, providing for their families, and contributing to Idaho's economy.”

The Close the Gap Idaho coalition will continue to advocate for the unmodified implementation of Medicaid expansion over the legislative session. Concurrently, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare will submit a State Plan Amendment (SPA) to the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services by February 15th, which should then be approved within 90 days. Enrollment for eligible Idahoans will begin in October and coverage will begin on January 1, 2020.

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About Close the Gap Idaho: Close the Gap Idaho is a network of over 500 organizations and individuals statewide, working to support a complete solution to the coverage gap and to preserve health coverage for Idahoans. Close the Gap Idaho has led the effort to expand Medicaid in Idaho since 2014. A list of Close the Gap Idaho steering committee members can be found on the [Close the Gap Idaho website](#).