

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF MEDICAID EXPANSION
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
BENEFIS HEALTH SYSTEM
NOVEMBER 30, 2023

WHEREAS, Benefis Health System exists to improve the health of the patients and communities we serve;

WHEREAS, a significant body of research, studies and reports indicate that having health coverage is key to improving the health status of a community;

WHEREAS, a high rate of uninsured residents is linked to an increase in the severity of patient conditions, poorer outcomes, and higher costs as a result of delayed care and seeking emergency care for conditions that could have been avoided or managed through preventative care;

WHEREAS, the expansion of Medicaid in Montana has provided healthcare coverage to low-income Montanans who otherwise have few other options for healthcare coverage, helping to reduce the rate of uninsured Montanans by 45% and by an average of 11 percentage points per county across our 14-county northcentral Montana service area since Medicaid expansion was implemented;

WHEREAS, Montana is experiencing a behavioral health crisis, and Montana's expansion of Medicaid provides a stable payment source for behavioral health services including \$54 million in new funds for substance abuse disorder prevention and medication-assisted treatment to address the state's opioid epidemic;

WHEREAS, from September 2022 to September 2023, Medicaid expansion in our service area has improved health outcomes and led to early detection of disease, including breast cancer screenings and treatment for 1,473 women, 615 colon cancer screenings which potentially averted 194 cases of cancer, mental health services for 6,599 patients, and substance abuse treatment for 1,552 patients;

WHEREAS, Montana has the 13th lowest rate of state general fund spending on Medicaid nationally and a lower rate of spending than peer states (CO, ND, SD, WA, WY), including those states that have not expanded Medicaid (SD, WY);

WHEREAS, Medicaid expansion has significantly grown Montana's economy according to a 2023 study conducted by ABMJ Consulting, which reported that Medicaid expansion helped create and sustain over 7,500 new jobs across multiple industries, and generated an estimated \$475 million in new personal income and \$775 million in economic activity in 2022. In our service

area, Medicaid expansion has supported 1,533 jobs, \$92,276,000 in personal income and \$229,291,000 in local economic activity;

WHEREAS, Benefis Health System has remained financially viable due in large part to a 76.7% reduction in bad debt levels since Medicaid expansion took effect;

WHEREAS, Benefis Health System is currently facing unprecedented financial pressures resulting from a 19.4% increase in expenses from 2020-2022 (driven by post-pandemic forces including a shortage of healthcare workers and reliance on temporary contractors, increased prices for drugs and other supplies) paired with a 3.8% revenue increase in 2022 compared to the prior year;

WHEREAS, the payments received for caring for Medicaid patients represents 28.2% of Benefis Health System revenues, which support the financial stability of our organization for all who depend on us for care;

WHEREAS, residents from our service area receive care not only from us but several other Montana hospitals, independent physicians and health services, and the ability of these providers to remain financially viable and continue to provide care to all patients may be negatively impacted by significant changes to or the sunset of Medicaid expansion in Montana;

WHEREAS, the Benefis Health System Board of Directors has a fiduciary responsibility to our community to plan for the fiscal impacts of any major known or anticipated event on the organization, such as the current Medicaid expansion sunset date of July 2025;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, Benefis Health System endorses Montana's current Medicaid expansion program, supports repealing the sunset of the program, and further recognizes our patients, caregivers, and the citizens of northcentral Montana have a compelling interest in ensuring our hospital remains financially viable and an economic engine for our surrounding area;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Benefis Health System strongly requests our legislative delegation and the Montana Legislature to repeal the sunset of the Medicaid Reform and Integrity Act passed in 2019 and protect healthcare coverage for low-income Montanans and the \$775 million economic engine it has created; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Benefis Health System will inform members of our community and local legislators on the impacts to local healthcare services should the Legislature not renew the program.

APPROVED ON THIS DAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2023, BY THE GOVERNING BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
Benefis Health System.



ED BUTTREY, Board Chair

Board Members:

SHANNON HOILAND, Vice Chair

MIKE MILBURN, Director

BILL BOURRET, Director

TANYA CAMERON, Director

DAVE RICHARDS, Director

DON HAMILTON, Director

GENE MCALLISTER, Director

GENE THAYER, Director

WILLIAM MCGREGOR, Director

JOHN GOODNOW, Director and CEO