**Top line message: Medicaid expansion keeps Montanans, our economy,**

**and our healthcare system healthy.[[1]](#footnote-1)**

* Focus on themes such as consistency, reliability, proven success - not only for Medicaid expansion enrollees, but for businesses, providers, and communities served.
  + Example: “IHS facilities were able to expand the kinds of care offered after the state passed Medicaid expansion.”
* The goal is to remind the audience Medicaid expansion has been beneficial and pose ending Medicaid Expansion as an unquantified risky maneuver.
* *Avoid* starting with “reliance” messaging (e.g. “Montana’s health care system relies on Medicaid,” which may trigger negative associations, and instead, focus on improvements expansion has brought.)
  + Montana’s state investments into provider rates and mental health are buoyed by our continued support of Medicaid. Without expansion, these efforts to improve health would be in vain.

**AREA FOCUS: HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM**

**Keep Investing in Healthcare.**

* **Medicaid expansion has made mental health and substance use treatment available across the state.**
  + Medicaid expansion has led to a significant number of treatment options for people with substance use disorders. The number of substance use disorder provider locations in Montana has jumped from 95 to 208 post-expansion.
* **Montana has made significant investments into our health care system that we can continue to build upon with recent state actions.**
  + [HB 872](http://laws.leg.mt.gov/legprd/LAW0203W$BSRV.ActionQuery?P_SESS=20231&P_BLTP_BILL_TYP_CD=HB&P_BILL_NO=872&P_BILL_DFT_NO=&P_CHPT_NO=&Z_ACTION=Find&P_ENTY_ID_SEQ2=&P_SBJT_SBJ_CD=&P_ENTY_ID_SEQ=) created a $300 million fund to improve mental and behavioral health care in Montana. Medicaid expansion is a critical support to the mental and behavioral health care providers, and continuing the program is essential to making this investment successful.
  + Similarly, Montana’s significant investment in provider rates for health providers serving Medicaid patients builds upon the capacity leveraged through Medicaid expansion.
* **Medicaid expansion has allowed providers to expand health services in Montana, and enrollees are accessing less expensive care.**
  + For those on Medicaid expansion, the number of emergency department visits declined by 11% after the first year, with enrollees having greater access to preventive care and early screenings.
  + Medicaid expansion enrollees experiencing chronic disease are more likely to have their condition diagnosed and treated outside of the emergency room.
* **Keep Montana’s hospital doors open: Medicaid expansion has been an essential support for rural hospitals.** 
  + We can’t risk hospitals closing their doors.
  + While no hospitals have closed in Montana since expansion was implemented, hospitals in expansion states are six times less likely to close.
  + Without Medicaid expansion, hospitals will once again face high uncompensated care costs.

**AREA FOCUS: RIGHT TO HEALTH CARE**

**Keep Montanans Healthy.**

* **Medicaid expansion provides access to life saving care.** 
  + Medicaid expansion provides access to care when people are in a time of need.
  + Thousands of people have received lifesaving cancer or diabetes screenings and have had better access to mental health care.
* **Keep healthcare accessible: Expansion has improved health care access not only for people on Medicaid, but for all Montanans.**
  + Medicaid expansion improves healthcare for *all* Montanans. By strengthening our health care delivery system, thousands of Montanans have access to improved care.
  + Medicaid expansion has brought in more options for mental health and substance use treatments, and increased the services Indian Health Services facilities can offer.
  + Because of expansion, rural Montana health care hospitals and providers can stay open and keep providing necessary services to their entire community.
* **Keep Montanans moving forward: Medicaid expansion helps people during a difficult period in their lives and move to more stability.**
  + Most people on Medicaid expansion stay on for a short period of time.
  + Medicaid makes it easier for people to afford health care, allowing them to pay rent, improve their credit, and face financial emergencies.

**AREA FOCUS: BUDGET**

**Keep Our State Budget Healthy.**

* **Montana’s state budget is boosted by Medicaid expansion.**
  + The federal government pays 90 percent of the costs of expansion, while the state pays only 10 percent.
  + Medicaid expansion generated $27 million in state budget savings in FY 2022 by providing higher match rates for some existing Medicaid populations and by replacing existing state spending with new federal dollars. If expansion were to sunset, the state would pay *more* for some populations.
  + Uncompensated care costs for Critical Access Hospitals in Montana dropped by more than a third.
  + The majority of costs to the state are offset by economic benefits and resulting revenue.
* **Medicaid expansion has brought significant federal funds into the state.** 
  + Medicaid expansion continues to infuse over $900 million in new federal spending into Montana annually, creating jobs and economic activity.
  + These federal funds have improved the health care Montana can offer.
* **Montana has recently made more state investments into our health care system. Ending expansion would undermine those efforts.**

**AREA FOCUS: ECONOMY**

**Keep Montanans working.**

* **Medicaid expansion supports thousands of working Montanans.** 
  + Most (76%) of Montanans on Medicaid work or are in school, with most of the remainder taking care of a family member or living with an illness or disability. In total, 96% work or have a reasonable impediment to work.
  + Without proper health care, Montanans living with chronic illnesses will have more difficulty finding and holding down jobs.
  + Not only do most people on Medicaid expansion work, they work in demanding jobs that are critical to the economy – like childcare, tourism, construction, and agriculture.
* **Medicaid expansion creates jobs.** 
  + Expansion creates 7,500 new jobs each year, and generates $475 million in personal income.
  + Many of these jobs are in health care, meaning all Montanans benefit from a stronger healthcare workforce.
* **Keep businesses thriving: Medicaid expansion benefits rural and small businesses and employers by providing health care access.**
  + Medicaid expansion keeps small Montana businesses competitive with larger corporations, by providing their employees with healthcare.
  + Six in 10 Montana employers employ a worker on Medicaid expansion.
  + Medicaid expansion keeps rural Montana businesses open, with 70 percent of businesses employing a worker on Medicaid expansion.
  + Medicaid expansion has been particularly important for key sectors of Montana’s economy, including tourism (food service, hotel, and retail), construction, and agriculture.
* **Keep business doors open: Most employers in Montana are too small to offer health insurance. Medicaid expansion supports workers and local businesses.**
  + Small, rural, and Main Street businesses have faced enough uncertainty over the past several years. Ending expansion would pull the rug out from under many Montana businesses.
  + With access to health care, Medicaid expansion keeps Montana workers in the state and in the workforce.
  + Small businesses are the backbone of Montana’s economy. Medicaid expansion keeps workers healthy and working.

**AREA FOCUS: TRIBAL RIGHTS AND SOVEREIGNTY**

**Keep IHS and Tribal Health Facilities Thriving.**

* **Medicaid expansion federal funds has allowed IHS facilities to improve and increase their services to their communities.** 
  + Because the United States has treaty obligations to provide healthcare in Indian Country, the federal government covers 100% of Medicaid expansion services at IHS and tribal health facilities.
  + Medicaid expansion has enabled IHS and tribal health facilities across the state to move from only being able to offer level 1, “life or limb” services, to level 4, preventative services.
* **Keep health care accessible in Indian Country: Medicaid expansion has improved access to health care across Indian Country.** 
  + Medicaid expansion provided health care coverage to more than 19,000 Montanans who are American Indian in 2021.
  + Medicaid expansion has allowed for improved access to mental health services, addiction treatment, cancer screenings, and preventative services.
  + By improving the services IHS facilities can offer, Medicaid expansion has benefited all American Indian people living on or near reservations, not just Medicaid expansion recipients.

**RESPONSE MESSAGING**

These talking points should not be used independently: Avoid repeating anti-expansion arguments. However, they are examples of what to say in response to certain arguments.

* Argument: There are too many people on Medicaid expansion. The program grew to higher numbers than predicted.
  + Response: With higher unemployment and economic instability, Medicaid was a critical program to support families and workers during the public health emergency. While enrollment grew during the public health emergency, it is now returning to lower levels.
  + The state received higher federal funding to offset the additional cost of having more people on Medicaid.
  + Medicaid should be there for people during times of crisis. Whether it’s an economic downturn or a pandemic, Medicaid is an essential safety net.
* Argument: Medicaid creates dependency. We need more stringent requirements/work requirements.
  + Response: Most people stay on Medicaid for a short period of time, often during short periods of unemployment or fluctuations in wages or hours.
  + In fact, most people on Medicaid are working, but at jobs that don’t pay well. When Montanans see their wages increase, they no longer need Medicaid.

* Argument: Medicaid is too expensive.
  + The federal government pays for 90 percent of Medicaid costs, and the state pays 10 percent.
  + The costs are offset by revenue generated by increased income, and state budget savings on expenses that would otherwise need to go to the uninsured.
* Argument: Montana should try an alternative (different model, managed care, end expansion etc.)
  + Ending/changing expansion would pull the rug out from under Montana families, businesses, and providers.
  + Montana has made significant improvements to its health care system by increasing provider rates and investing in mental health care. If expansion ends/changes, providers would be left with uncertainty.

1. Sources include: Montana Health Care Foundation, “[Medicaid in Montana: How Medicaid Impacts Montana’s State Budget, Economy, and Health](https://mthcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-Medicaid-in-Montana-Report_FINAL.pdf),” Jan. 2023; Ward, Bryce, “[Economic Effects of Medicaid Expansion in Montana](https://mthcf.org/wp-content/uploads/Medicaid-Expansion_2023-Update_FINAL.pdf),” ABMJ Consulting, Jan. 2023; Lindrooth, R., et al, “[Understanding The Relationship Between Medicaid Expansions And Hospital Closures](https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2017.0976),” Health Affairs, Jan. 2018; Watson, Amy, “[Medicaid Expansion and Montana Businesses](https://lmi.mt.gov/_docs/Publications/EAG-Articles/0920-MedicaidExp.pdf),” Department of Labor and Industry, accessed Nov. 2023; and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “[The Far-Reaching Benefits of Medicaid Expansion](https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/chart-book-the-far-reaching-benefits-of-the-affordable-care-acts-medicaid-expansion#4),” October 21, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)