



A RESOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN WITNESS AFFIRMING SUPPORT FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HEALTH PROTECTION PROGRAM (MEDICAID EXPANSION IN NH)

Submitted to the Board of Directors of the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ, for consideration by the Economic Justice Mission Group, January 2018

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SUMMARY

This resolution builds upon a previous resolution adopted by the New Hampshire Conference UCC Council on September 19, 2013. It affirms that the New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ, (NHCUCC) is in strong support of the continuation of the expanded Medicaid Program in New Hampshire (known as the NH Health Protection Program) and encourages its long-term reauthorization and funding through the legislative process so that tens of thousands of NH's working poor and other eligible individuals will continue to have access to health care services, including treatment for substance abuse disorders.

BACKGROUND

The NHCUCC's 2013 resolution calling for the implementation of an expanded Medicaid Program for NH residents draws upon a national *Faith-Inspired Vision of Health Care* (to which our own denominational Justice and Witness Ministries and the NH Council of Churches are signatory) that embraces the notion that every individual in our society deserves "health, wholeness, and human dignity," including access to "a system of health care that is inclusive, accessible, affordable, and accountable." The 2013 resolution also lifts by the key tenets of this *Faith-Inspired Vision* that:

- "Health care is a shared responsibility that is grounded in our common humanity. In the bonds of our human family, we are created to be equal. We are guided by a divine will to treat each person with dignity and to live together as an inclusive community. Affirming our commitment to the common good, we acknowledge our enduring responsibility to care for one another. As we recognize that society is whole only when we care for the most vulnerable among us, we are led to discern the human right to health care and wholeness. Therefore, we are called to act with compassion by sharing our abundant health care resources with everyone."

- *“All persons should have access to health services that provide necessary care and contribute to wellness. We believe humanity is sacred and that all persons should benefit from those actions which contribute to our health and wholeness. Therefore, we are called to act with justice and love to ensure that all of us have access to the health care we need in order to live out the fullness of our potential, both as individuals and as contributing members of our society. We must work together to identify and overcome all barriers to and disparities in such care.”*

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, health and healing are prominent within the Biblical story; and love, mercy and resource-sharing are equally prominent within God’s Word and Jesus’ ministry, and these themes have a significant presence in the Bible, including Deuteronomy 15: 7-11, where it is written, *“If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbor..... Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land’”*; and Matthew 25: 44-45, where it is written, *“Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you? Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me’”*; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, the NH Legislature authorized the implementation of an Expanded Medicaid program (under the federal Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare) known as the NH Health Protection Program (NHHPP) that, since its inception, has made it possible for over 130,000 low-income individuals to secure access to critical health care services (as of late 2017), with over 50,000 NH residents typically being served by the program at any given point in time; and

WHEREAS, enrollment in the NH Health Protection Program encompasses thousands of hard-working individuals in New Hampshire, including child care providers, home health care workers and related health service providers, retail and food service workers, those who work within the travel and tourism industry, and many other low wage workers and working families in the state; and

WHEREAS, more than 23,000 individuals have gained access to substance abuse and addiction treatment services (as of late 2017) through the NH Health Protection Program, and access to such treatment has also supported significant numbers to individuals suffering addictions as they participate successfully in drug court programs; and

WHEREAS, without an expanded Medicaid Program, more than 50,000 individuals in NH at any given point in time would have little or no access to preventative care and care for chronic conditions, even as it is widely understood in the medical field that treatable conditions, left untreated, often evolve into significant health emergencies, with these emergencies often resulting not only in catastrophic health consequences but also in devastating and destabilizing economic consequences for the impacted individuals and their families; and

WHEREAS, when individuals lack access to health care, their health emergencies are primarily addressed in the least appropriate and most costly means possible through hospital emergency rooms, with the high costs of this uncompensated care being passed on to premium payers and others within the health care system;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

That the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, in the words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., recognizes the “fierce urgency of now” in terms of continuation of the Expanded Medicaid program in New Hampshire, and that the NHCUCC:

- declares publicly its support for continuation and long-term authorization of the Expanded Medicaid program in New Hampshire through a sustainable funding mechanism, with NHCUCC leadership conveying this support to the NH House and Senate leadership and to the Governor; and,
- encourages UCC clergy and lay members to participate in public vigils and to offer legislative testimony, in person or in writing, about the critical importance of maintaining the Expanded Medicaid program; and,
- invites UCC clergy and lay members to engage in other forms of faith witness and advocacy as appropriate to urge the continuation of the Expanded Medicaid program.

PLAN OF ACTION

Implementing Body: The Economic Justice Mission Group will take the lead in the implementation of this resolution and will work closely with the multi-faith NH Voices of Faith in this regard. The Mission Group also will ask for support from the Conference in making this resolution known publicly.

It is possible that other Mission Groups within the NHCUCC Justice and Witness Ministry (for example, the Opioid Crisis Mission Group) may also want to play an active role in promoting and participating in the advocacy called for in this resolution.

The NHCUCC *Weekly News* will be used as a key tool for educating our congregations about this resolution and the critical importance of maintaining the Expanded Medicaid program.

Anticipated Costs: No additional NHCUCC budgetary allocation beyond existing Mission Group budgets will be needed to publicize or carry out this resolution.