

# Governor Welcomes Rural Health Care Leaders to Discuss Medicaid Expansion

## Hospital CEOs present Governor Cooper with resolutions urging legislature to close health care coverage gap

Chief executives from seven rural hospitals shared with Governor Roy Cooper and Secretary Mandy Cohen of the Department of Health and Human Services their support for North Carolina to act now to close the health care coverage gap. The roundtable meeting focused on the challenges and opportunities in providing health care to rural communities and how expanding Medicaid can help.

"Closing the health care coverage gap would be a boost for rural communities," Gov. Cooper said. "Expanding Medicaid will help thousands of North Carolinians get access to affordable health care, invest billions of dollars in our economy and create thousands of good-paying jobs."

Expanding Medicaid would provide critical health and economic support to North Carolina's rural communities, where nearly 30 percent of low-income residents are uninsured. Rural communities suffer from higher rates of preventable disease, alcohol and drug use, injury, teen births, and overall mortality than urban communities. Medicaid expansion would boost North Carolina's economy by \$4 billion and create over 13,000 good-paying jobs in rural counties within five years.

The health care coverage gap hurts rural hospitals, which already struggle financially to stay open. Four of North Carolina's rural hospitals have closed since 2014 and 40 percent of the state's remaining rural hospitals run on budget deficits. Nationwide, 82 percent of rural hospital closures have been in states that refused to expand Medicaid.

The roundtable discussion about the state of rural health care and the need to close the health care coverage gap included Mark Kimball, CEO of Erlanger Western Carolina Hospital in Murphy; Tom Siemers, President and CEO of Doshier Hospital in Southport; Angela Orth, CEO of Randolph of Asheboro; Chris Lumsden, President and CEO of Neshon of Surry County in Mount Airy; Michael Nagowski, CEO of Cape Fear Valley Health System in Fayetteville; L. Lee Isley, CEO of Nash UNC Health Care in Rocky Mount; and Jeffrey Stickler, President and Mary Beck, Board Chair of Chatham Hospital in Siler City.

Several hospitals represented at today's roundtable meeting presented Gov. Cooper with resolutions urging the General Assembly to take immediate action to close the health care coverage gap.

Closing the health insurance coverage gap for families who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid remains a top priority for Gov. Cooper. Currently, a family of four with working parents must earn less than \$9,000 to qualify for Medicaid. The same family's income would have to exceed \$25,000 to qualify for a federal subsidy to purchase health insurance. That leaves many families who earn too much for Medicaid and too little for a subsidy without health insurance. Since 2014, 37 states under bipartisan leadership, including the District of Columbia, have helped close the gap by expanding Medicaid so more people can get coverage.

## State Highway Patrol Unveils New Helicopters



The State Highway Patrol unveiled the addition of two new Bell 407 helicopters last Tuesday to assist in the Patrol's lifesaving mission. The event held at the SHP's Aviation Unit hanger in Raleigh showcased the needed upgrade to the Patrol's distinguished guest and media invitees. Although

these new helicopters are a part of the SHP, the majority of the missions conducted are for agencies other than the State Highway Patrol. Year after year, 80%-85% of the missions are for local agencies that need help in finding missing persons to include the search for missing children.

"As the needs associated with providing public safety have advanced, upgrades to the equipment used to meet those needs must be continually assessed," said Colonel Glenn McNeill, commander of the SHP. "The aircraft on display here today possess extremely sophisticated technology that can be used to save lives, protect communities and deter criminal behavior."

The two new units are completely operational and ready to begin serving the people of North Carolina.

## NC Insurance Commissioner Negotiates a Settlement on Proposed Auto Insurance Rates

North Carolina Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey has announced he has settled with the N.C. Rate Bureau for an overall average rate increase of 1.6 percent on personal auto insurance. The NCRB, which is not a part of the Department of Insurance and represents insurance companies writing policies in North Carolina, had requested an average 7.6 percent increase in a Feb. 1 filing.

As part of the settlement, the NCRB has agreed not to seek a further increase in rates until 2021.

Actuaries at the Department of Insurance have calculated the difference. Consumers will pay approximately \$942 million with the 1.6 percent approved rate instead of the NCRB's requested increase.

Physical damage costs (comprehensive and collision insurance) will see a decrease of 9.1 percent. Liability insurance will see an increase of 11.3 percent, resulting in the average 1.6 percent increase.

"We were able to hold auto insurance rate increases to less than 2 percent, which consumers will hardly notice in their premiums," Commissioner Causey said, noting that distracted driving has gained momentum as a leading cause of accidents, putting an upward pressure on insurance rates.

"Getting motorists to focus on their driving and not get distracted while at the wheel would go a long way toward further holding down the cost of auto insurance," Commissioner Causey said.

To combat distracted driving, Commissioner Causey is backing House Bill 144, the Hands-Free NC Act, which would allow cell phone use by motorists with hands-free devices.

The new rates take effect Oct. 1.

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Registration available at the Sunshine Shoppe, 122 Main Street in Chesterfield.

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## Anson County Tax Collector

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**Anson County Tax Collector**  
**101 South Greene Street**  
**Wadesboro, NC 28170**  
**704-994-3218**

# Spirit Night

**Thursday, May 2**  
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