**Expand Medicaid and Help Business**

 As a supporter of the Affordable Care Act, I was very pleased with Governor Snyder’s decision to support the expansion of Medicaid in Michigan. The Governor provided all the correct reasons for supporting the expansion; increase coverage for 500,000 people in Michigan and an additional $1.5 to $2 billion a year in new federal spending for Michigan to pay for the expansion, help the economy and create new jobs.

 But there is another very important reason why we must expand Medicaid in Michigan because it will help the business community in Michigan.

 Beginning in 2014 businesses with 50 or more employees must provide health care coverage to their employees or pay a penalty. For many businesses that employ minimum wage workers, if Medicaid is expanded then those workers will be eligible to receive health care and the employer is off the hook. But if Medicaid is not expanded then those businesses will assume responsibility for providing health care to those employees. The cost to these businesses could be as high as $5,000 a year to insure each worker. Although the cost of providing health care is tax deductible, the cost of paying the penalty if business chose not to provide health care, is not deductible.

 I hope the Republican controlled State Legislature support Governor Snyder’s proposal to expand Medicaid. This will help a portion of the business community to continue to hire minimum wage employees who need health care coverage.

 We may not all agree about all aspects of the Affordable Care Act, but it is the law of the land and Michigan should take advantage of all the benefits that an expanded Medicaid program will bring to Michigan.

 John Freeman

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