

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Kevin Rogers I am the Policy and Public Affairs Director for Action NC, a community organizing and issue advocacy group that works to assist low to moderate income communities and families in North Carolina. And there is no more critical an issue to families in North Carolina than access to quality, affordable health care. Unfortunately, NC lawmakers have decided it was more political advantageous for them to stand in the way of NC women and their families, rather than to stand with them. We need to make sure they understand this was a bad choice.

We all know that the Affordable Care Act is here to stay – it is the law of the land. It has withstood the test of the US Congress, the US Supreme Court, and the court of public opinion. But North Carolina lawmakers continue to refuse to fully implement the law by expanding Medicaid coverage in our state. To score political points, the General Assembly is denying healthcare to more than ½ a million of our fellow North Carolinians.

That is bad enough, but the impact to women and their families has been particularly acute. More than 600,000 women, over 20% of women in North Carolina, are uninsured, and of those women who are uninsured, 52% are currently employed. When combined with the other reforms in the ACA, this coverage expansion would reduce the number of uninsured women in North Carolina by 48%, providing insurance for 277,000 women.

The response from the Governor and policymakers in Raleigh has been predictable - they formed task forces and study committees to address different policy concerns while ignoring the single most important tool we have for confronting North Carolina's most shocking health care problems. **Instead of talk, instead of studies, we need to expand Medicaid.**

This year's budget includes strategies to reduce our terrible infant mortality rates. You'll hear later that while expansion is not the complete answer, it is one of the most important single steps we could take to promote healthy births and protect women's health. **Women don't need more studies; they need health care.**

And we continue to hear how the Governor and legislature want to create jobs in the state. Yesterday, Gov. McCrory was at an event to announce that Fidelity will bring 600 new jobs to North Carolina. That's good news for the Triangle, but at the same time a factory that employees 500 people is closing in Rockingham County. The Governor and Senate leader Phil Berger say they are creating a strategic plan to address these layoffs. But expanding Medicaid would provide the people losing employer insurance with health care and create 43,000 new jobs all across the state. **The unemployed and working poor don't need a strategic plan; they need Medicaid expansion.**

Today, I'm going to make the work of these committees much easier. Instead of meeting for months and making recommendations around the edges to improve the health of women and families, let's just accept Medicaid expansion. This one policy will make treatment available to thousands of people, reduce our infant mortality rate, and create jobs.

Our lawmaker have stood in the way of women and their families in NC long enough. It's time for them stand with us - or get the heck out of the way.