

Good afternoon everyone. I'm Jessica Hope Murrell Berryman and I'm a mommy, business owner, and proud member of MomsRising.org. I'm one of more than 39,000 North Carolina MomsRising members in all 100 counties in the state.

Parents know how important it is for ALL families to have and maintain health insurance. I personally know how much this matters because my mother and grandmother (GiGi) are both breast cancer survivors. Had either of them found themselves without insurance during that time in their lives, their cancer might not have been found in time and they might not have gotten the treatment they needed... They might not be survivors.

When I received my very first paycheck the conversation with my parents went something like this: Mommy, Daddy - who is Medicare and Social Security and why are they taking money out of MY check?

What a tremendous laugh that gave my parents. After they wiped the tears out of their eyes from laughing so hard, they talked to me about the importance of governmental programs that are there for all of us to use when we might find ourselves in need of them. Their explanation was awesome, but I reassured myself that those programs would be something that I would NEVER have to use. Boy did I eat my words.

Years later, after graduating from college in December 2007, I found myself uninsured and in need of prenatal care during my pregnancy with my beautiful first daughter. Remember jobs were few and far between at that time, and as many of us women know, job hunting while expecting can be a very difficult task—especially when people don't have a desire to hire in the first place. Fortunately, Medicaid provided me with the coverage I needed to get care during my pregnancy and deliver my daughter—our future—here in North Carolina!

Medicaid helps people who find themselves in transition through life's seasons of change and difficulties. It is an avenue to help ensure that families receive healthcare during times of financial hardship so they can provide and care for their children and loved ones; so they can receive the necessary health assessments, vaccinations, mental health support to keep them safe; and so they can get routine preventative care... the type of preventative care that caught my mommy and GiGi's breast cancers early enough to ensure they could become survivors.

I am happy to say there is a beautiful end to the story, I am currently a small business owner and insured. So don't judge the Medicaid book by its cover. Open it up, read the facts, and spread the knowledge. The half a million North Carolinians who fall in the Coverage Gap are people whose lives matter. They are someone's mother, grandmother, or other family member. This isn't about politics. This is about lives on the line. It's time for North Carolina to expand Medicaid.