

Good afternoon

My name is Robin Lane

I am honored to be with Dr. Barber and all of you for this important event, but also sad that we must state *yet again* the urgency for Medicaid Expansion.

The last time I spoke was in July - at a press event in Greensboro where we asked the Governor to show us his plan for expansion, the plan he promised us.

At that time, in July, Georgetown University had just released a report which outlined how NC's refusal to accept Medicaid Expansion funds hurts NC families.

I want to share three findings with you.

1. (first) **Children who live in families with uninsured parents are less likely to be enrolled in insurance even when they are eligible for coverage.**

There are some 90,000 of these children in NC, important because children are not getting care they need (immunizations, for example).

- 2.(second) **Access to health insurance is critical for the financial stability of NC families.**

It makes sense: without health insurance a family's finances can be ruined by any major medical event. Pressing financial needs (housing, food, transportation, daycare) mean visits to the doctor are put off, making costly illness more likely to wipe out a family's bank account.

But even more troubling:

When parents don't have access to insurance and routine care, innocent babies are at risk, leading to infant mortality rates in NC that suggest we need to do more.

3. (third) In fact, the third finding of the Georgetown report is that **Medicaid Expansion could be an effective tool to decrease NC's infant mortality rate.**

Infant mortality, the rate at which babies die before they turn one, is a complex problem.

We need to know more.

But here's what we do know: the care a mother receives before she becomes pregnant makes a real difference.

Routine access to health care creates a better chance for "preconception health" because it can give a future mom ways to control depression, hypertension, and other medical conditions that can cause low birth weight and prematurity, problems which in

turn contribute to infant deaths while generating huge medical bills for mother, child and eventually for all of us.

Back in the 1980's NC made headlines when we were bottom of the infant mortality listings, 50 out of 50 with the highest rate of any state. Then, as now, we had a Republican governor but then, unlike now, there was resolve to fix the problem... we were the state that lived up to the motto "to be rather than to seem."

The Governor took action and the rate dropped year by year. More babies lived to celebrate their first birthday.

How do we know that Medicaid Expansion will be effective now?

Consider this: in two states that have expanded coverage, one on the west coast and one on the east, California and Massachusetts, the infant mortality rate is 4.8 and 4.4 respectively. Our rate is stuck around 7.1 or approximately 7 deaths for every 1,000 babies born in NC.

In numbers, more than 800 babies who die before they turn one. Many more African American babies than white. We can do better.

Experts say "Medicaid Expansion is the next bold step we need to take" the thing we need to do to "be rather than to seem".

So as we honor those whose deaths we might have prevented, please remember 800 babies lost and know that some who died might be with us today if we had done the right thing.

If we had developed a plan and found the way to implement Medicaid Expansion.

We still can do this.

Thank you.

Robin Lane, RN, PNP-C, MPH

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