

**BOARD MATTER**  
**Chairman Sharon Bulova**  
**Urging General Assembly Action To Increase Access for Uninsured**  
**March 25, 2014**

Earlier today the Board received a final report on General Assembly activities. Unfortunately, one issue that was not resolved during the 2014 GA session is the issue of Medicaid expansion. That issue is a top priority in the Fairfax County Legislative Program, as our Board recognizes the importance of providing health care coverage to some of the most vulnerable in our population. Additionally, the expansion of Medicaid is a top priority of our business community, garnering support from Chambers of Commerce throughout Virginia, including our own Fairfax Chamber. In fact, earlier this month a coalition of business and community leaders announced a campaign, called “A Healthy Virginia Works,” to galvanize support for a private option Medicaid expansion plan.

In Fairfax County alone, up to 30,000 low-income residents would become eligible for Medicaid through expansion, including: individuals earning less than \$15,302 per year; families earning less than \$31,155 per year; low-income children who lose Medicaid when they turn 19; and, adults with disabilities not eligible for Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance. In fact, over one million Virginians under the age of 64 are uninsured – many of them are in families with at least one full- or part-time worker, but are not provided health insurance through their employers, cannot afford coverage on their own or do not make enough to qualify for insurance offered through the health care exchanges. As a result, when these uninsured Virginians need medical care, that care is subsidized by employed Virginians through higher insurance premiums and increased provider costs, as doctors, hospitals and insurance companies seek to recoup the costs of care they provide to the uninsured. This cost-shifting will continue to increase faster than inflation if the Commonwealth does not ensure more Virginians have access to affordable health care coverage.

There is also an existing financial burden on County-funded safety net providers, including non-profits, which would be relieved if many of those low-income residents who currently receive uncompensated care become eligible for Medicaid. For example, the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board estimates that the percentage of clients receiving substance abuse or mental health services who are covered by Medicaid will rise from 38 percent to 50 percent.

Expansion of Medicaid will also allow Virginians to recoup the mandatory costs of the Affordable Care Act. Through 2022, Virginians will send \$29.7 billion to the federal government through ACA-mandated taxes, fees and provider payment cuts. If Medicaid is not expanded in Virginia, our tax dollars will be used to pay for uninsured in other states, with no assistance being provided to our own uninsured. The Commonwealth has a responsibility to recoup these funds to help its own citizens, by developing a financially sound plan that will ensure Virginia's health care delivery system will have the resources needed to provide quality services. Furthermore, increasing less expensive preventative care and reducing more expensive emergency care could have the added benefit of improving the overall health of our communities.

Therefore, I ask that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors reiterate its strong support for the expansion of Medicaid in Virginia. Furthermore, we urge the Virginia General Assembly to develop and implement a plan to provide more Virginians with access to affordable health care coverage and services, and to take advantage of reclaiming federal funds paid by Virginians through the Affordable Care Act for this implementation, in order to protect the health of our citizens, save jobs, boost the economy and help manage the cost of care for all residents of Fairfax County and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Accordingly, I move that County staff be directed to draft a letter, for the Chairman's signature, to our General Assembly delegation, reaffirming our support for closing the coverage gap.