



IDAHO ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
STRONG MEDICINE FOR IDAHO

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The Idaho Academy of Family Physicians (IAFP) is a membership organization representing over 675 family physicians, family medicine residents and medical students in Idaho. The IAFP supports the Healthy Idaho Plan because of the security it will provide for Idaho citizens and the stability it would ensure for Idaho's community hospitals.

The analysis conducted by an independent actuarial company (Milliman) found that more than 78,000 Idahoans are falling through the health insurance coverage gap. These citizens lack the benefits of the majority of Idahoans who possess health insurance coverage. Many of these people live sicker and die younger because the barriers they face in fostering a relationship with a family physician able to treat their healthcare needs. Many of these citizens have chronic illnesses that go untreated because of their inability to pay for sound disease management and therapy. Only when these citizens become very ill do they seek treatment at the most expensive setting in our healthcare system, the emergency room.

The states that have chosen to cover their gap citizens have proven that providing access to a family physician and comprehensive care leads to fewer ER visits and helps prevent significant health consequences and preventable death. Studies have shown that being a part of a patient-centered medical home leads to a reduction in hospitalizations and lower overall healthcare costs. This was confirmed in our own state by the Idaho Medical Home Collaborative pilot project. If these patients receive care early, the problem is addressed and the result is a much less expensive treatment approach.

Family physicians treat these patients but most often when it is too late to have an impact on their affliction and results in a very costly outcome. The Healthy Idaho Plan would allow Idaho's working poor to acquire health insurance coverage giving them access to a patient-centered medical home and benefit from comprehensive coordinated care.

Our citizens working in construction, landscape, tourism and foodservice, to name a few, are the ones most affected by the lack of health insurance coverage. Even though our unemployment rate seems reasonable at 3.8%, Idaho still ranks 50th in the nation for per-capita income and annual wages. Idaho's labor department's efforts of creating jobs to decrease the unemployment rate has paid off but those jobs do not pay enough to satisfy a family's financial needs.

Some Idaho rural and critical access hospitals are struggling and on the verge of closing because of the decrease in reimbursement and their inability to provide free care to low income patients who are unable to pay. Without the supplemental Federal funds, some rural hospitals will be forced to cut services or close their doors altogether.

Other issues facing these patients are their inability to acquire needed follow up therapy and care. When a patient presents to a physician's office without the resources for follow up care, the physician is prevented from fulfilling their obligation as a physician. Even though family physicians are able to provide 95% of the care for patient ailments, it's the remaining 5% that requires secondary services that often drive the majority of healthcare spending.

Unlike the Primary Care Access option, the Healthy Idaho Plan provides comprehensive care for eligible citizens and allows for preventative services, monitoring and follow up care. The Healthy Idaho Plan allows all physicians and healthcare providers to care for the additional patients and does not place the burden only on primary care providers who offer discounted services and a sliding fee schedule like the Primary Care Access program specifies.

The HIP would decrease the county tax burden allowing counties to use the County Indigent Funds for either additional programs or tax relief. Both the Primary Care Access program and the Healthy Idaho Plan would cost about \$30 million in 2017 but the savings through the HIP would occur in decreasing ER visits, decreased hospitalizations, access to more preventative services, and necessary mental health care. The PCA would not allow for the needed services and may cost more in the long term.

The Idaho Academy of Family Physicians endorses the Health Idaho Plan as the appropriate option for our citizens in the health insurance coverage gap.