

An Interfaith Letter to Governor Otter, Lawmakers

Dear Governor Otter and Idaho Legislators,

As faith community leaders, we ask you to consider the health care needs of our most vulnerable neighbors in Idaho and take action this legislative session to close the coverage gap.

We are concerned that 78,000 Idahoans cannot afford health insurance because they fall into the coverage gap: they earn too little to qualify for insurance tax credits on the exchange and too much for Medicaid. These members of our communities and our families are needlessly suffering, often delaying needed health care until their situations becomes dire. Cancers are going undiagnosed until it is too late to intervene; mental illnesses are left untreated because medications are too costly; and families are facing huge medical bills and spiraling into debt.

Though diverse, our faiths all teach us to care for those in need – for the sick, the impoverished, the widowed, and the abandoned. This faith imperative aligns well with the recommendation of Governor Otter’s Medicaid Redesign Workgroup for a “Healthy Idaho Plan” that would provide affordable access to health insurance coverage to every Idahoan in the gap. In the first year alone, the Healthy Idaho Plan will save hundreds of lives, create thousands of jobs and save the state and counties millions of dollars. It is the right choice for our businesses, our economy and most importantly, it will alleviate suffering and enhance the quality of life in our state.

Do not let Idaho neglect the needs of our most poor and marginalized in Idaho any longer. Instead, help us promote compassion in our health care system. Please take action to close the coverage gap and pass the Healthy Idaho Plan.

Thank you for your leadership on this important matter and willingness to listen to leaders of all faiths and backgrounds in Idaho.

Sincerely,



Lynn Bridges, Athol
Rev. Benjamin Wilson, Boise
Rev. Marci Auld Glass, Boise
Jane Kinn Buser, Boise
Abigail Wolford, Boise
Rev. Mother Shayshoshewa Dawe, Boise
Douglas Lobb, Boise
Dave Green, Boise
Roger Howard, Boise
Carol L. Becker, Boise
Reverend Elijah Sentah Stetson Brown, Boise
Suzanne Troje, Boise
Lisa McMillin, Boise
Judy Halverson, Boise
Melissa Ruth, Boise
Jeannette Bowman, Boise
Gayle A. Wilde, Boise
Rev. Brenda Sene, Boise
Tyler Fisher, Boise
Pamela Parks, Boise
Rita Hess, Boise
Henry Krewer, Boise
Rev. Judy McKay, Boise
Carol Hines, Boise
Susan Mann, Boise
Rev. Kim Mislin Cran, Boise
Debbie Mallis, Boise
Pam PiperRuth, Boise
Rabbi Daniel Fink, Boise
Ann Sansgaard, Boise
Gayle Woods, Boise
Rev. Dr. Duane Anders, Boise

Pastor Marc Schlegel-Preheim, Boise
Rev. Sara LaWall, Boise
Chaplain Kenneth Watts, Boise
Jordan Morales, Boise
Lori Conlon Khan, Boise
D G Van Curen, Boise
Bishop Brian Thom, Boise
Pamela Fonshill, Boise
Gretchen Bates, Boise
Charles Davis, Boise
Robert Vestal, MD Boise
Reverend Stan Hoobing, Boise
The Rev. Holladay Sanderson, Boise
Judy Cross, Boise
Terry McKay, Boise
Susan Mann, Boise
Nicholas Tinker, Boise
Dr. David Monsees, Boise
Barbara Abersold, Boise
Paul D Rolig, Boise
Reverend Stan Hoobing, Boise
Lars Sandven, Boise
Wanda Jennings, Boise
Mary Evelyn Smith, Boise
Thomas Rogers, Boise
Pastor Jim Grunow, Boise
Jenna Schlegel-Preheim, Boise
Susan Philley, Boise
Barbara Abersold, Boise
Dr. Molly O’Shea, Boise
Daniel A. Z. Foster, Boise
Pastor Renee McCall, Boise

Jo-Ann Kachigian, Boise
Judy Ferro, Caldwell
Reverend Kathy Raines, Caldwell
Gail Baravetto, Caldwell
Fred & Jeanne Pauls, Eagle
The Rev. Robert Spencer, Eagle
James & Jeanne Pauls, Eagle
Emilie Jackson-Edney, Garden City
Sarah Olson, Garden City
Gail LeBow, Garden City
Rev. Barbara Condon, Idaho Falls
Reverend Ruth A. Marsh, Idaho Falls
Reverend Lyn Stangland Cameron, Idaho Falls
Carl G. Van Slyke, Kuna
Laura McRoberts, Meridian
Deborah Espen, Meridian
Carolyn Blackhurst, Meridian
D Aragon, Meridian
Deborah Espen, Meridian
Pat Rathmann, Moscow
E. Patrick Fuerst, Moscow
Pastor Chiron Morgan, Nampa
Christine Sugg, Nampa
Pastor Jack Bynum, New Meadows
Gwendolyn B. Kimball, New Meadows
Susan Matsuura, Pocatello
Ann Swanson, Pocatello
Robert Gehrke, Pocatello
Muriel Roberts, Pocatello ID 83201
Jessica Dell, Post Falls
Bishop Martin Wells, Spokane

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Faith Leaders for a Complete Solution to the Coverage Gap

As people of faith, we are responsible for the basic well-being of every neighbor. Accessible and affordable health care is a foundation for successful living. Please do not leave any Idahoan in the “gap”.

- *Bishop Brian Thom*

As a member of the local Mormon community, this is the kind of compassionate legislation we should be advocating for.

- *Jordan Morales*

Jesus said, “Whenever you do so to the least of these, you do unto me.”

- *Rev. Kathy Raines*

As a physician whose medical career was dedicated to research, teaching, and the care of veterans at the VA Medical Center in Boise, I strongly support making affordable health care accessible to all people in Idaho and the United States. I believe that health care is something to which all human beings, including the underprivileged, are entitled. It is the moral duty and responsibility of our society to ensure that the health care needs of the members of our society are met with efficiency, quality, and compassion.

- *Robert Vestal, MD*

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America believes that the role of the church and its leaders is to reach out a hand and help uplift the needs of the underprivileged people of Idaho and elsewhere in our nation and around the world.

- *Rev. Stan Hoobing*

What is loving God? It's taking care of others. This we must do.

- *Susan Matsuura*

At Corpus Christi House in Boise we serve over 100 people each day. Some of them have Medicare or Medicaid but most have neither. Each year we hold about 200 memorial services for those guests that have died. In some instances their deaths are due to a lack of early medical care because of being part of the uninsured 78,000 Idahoans they cannot afford treatment. These deaths are just a small part of what is going on through our state.

As a compassionate citizen, I need to be aware of this suffering, as a Christian I need to pray for our neighbors who are suffering, and as a disciple I need to act to bring about the change that is needed to end this suffering”

- *Henry Krewer*

This is probably the most important and farthest reaching legislation that Idaho could pass this year. It costs little and does so much.

- *Robert Gehrke*

We cannot ignore or leave behind the most vulnerable among us. As a Minister my faith teaches me to stand on the side of Love with those who need our care and support.

- *Rev. Sara LaWall*

The wise choice is to not pay attention to the chattering from national politics and to do the right thing for Idaho. Closing the gap will reduce costs to the taxpayers and give people in need the healthcare they need. Pretty straight forward if you ask me.

- *Dave Green*

As a member of the United Methodist Church, I take the teachings from our “Social Principles” very seriously--most of the principles I agree with and follow in my daily living. I agree with the statement found in our Social Principles that health care for everyone is a human right. I disagree with the use of the term “entitlement” being used as a way to justify not covering the 78,000 Idahoans with health care because of their life's circumstances falling into the “gap”. These Idahoans have the human right to access to comprehensive health care.

- *Judy Halverson*

Access to adequate health care for ALL Idaho citizens is both a great ethical AND economic decision. Citizens cannot contribute to the vitality of Idaho if they are ill. Helping citizens take care of health issues when they initially arise is so much less expensive than government paying for crisis care when health problems have escalated. Idaho has already benefited from lower health costs from the introduction of the exchange. Providing a wider net of health coverage will only increase these benefits.

- *Jeannette Bowman*

This is so important to helping Idaho people.

- *Rev. Lyn Stangland Cameron*

The Healthy Idaho Plan is what we need. Please don't go home without doing something meaningful about the 78,000 uninsured.

- *Muriel Roberts*

It's the right thing to do.

- *Jo-Ann Kachigian*