**Medicaid Expansion Template Op-Ed**

Target Audience: Local opinion leaders, other health care providers

Signer: Health advocate

Word Count: XX

In January, Governor Jan Brewer (R-Arizona) announced her intention to accept her state’s share of federal funds to help more people secure health care coverage through Medicaid. When announcing her decision, the governor stated, “With this move, we will secure a federal revenue stream to cover the costs of the uninsured who already show up in our doctor’s offices and emergency rooms. Under the current system, these costs are passed along to Arizona families.” I strongly agree with Gov. [BREWER] and believe [STATE] should take the same step as [ARIZONA] and accept federal funding to cover more of our state’s residents.

To date, 23 other governors plus the mayor of the District of Columbia have decided to accept federal funds already set aside through the Affordable Care Act to provide health care coverage. This decision makes both common sense and fiscal sense because accepting the funds would not only allow [STATE] to ensure more of its residents have access to care when they need it, but would also reduce the cost of uncompensated care by millions of dollars. And by taking our fair share of federal funds, by 2014 [NUMBER] people in [STATE] who do not have affordable health coverage can get the care they need.

As a health care advocate, I see firsthand how important health care coverage is to our state’s working families. I know that if they can afford to see a health care provider for regular check-ups and vaccinations, they are less likely to go to the emergency room with more serious health problems that come at a high cost. [Insert story about a family that neglected routine care due to cost and ended up with serious health concerns and/or large medical bills.]

The [FAMILY]’s story is not unique – too many of our state’s citizens cannot get the care they need and end up seeking treatment in emergency rooms. And that’s an expensive proposition. According to the American Hospital Association, hospitals nationwide spent $39.3 billion in 2010 to treat patients who could not afford insurance. [If state data is available: Hospitals in [STATE] spent [AMOUNT]. Accepting the federal funds for Medicaid will ensure health dollars are spent more effectively by reducing costs for hospitals and clinics that currently serve people without insurance.

Moreover, Medicaid provides more comprehensive care than the emergency room. The ER is for emergencies. Cancer patients can’t go there for chemotherapy. A child can’t get a hearing aid to help her learn in school in the emergency room. Women can’t get routine mammograms in an ER. Covering more people through Medicaid means [STATE]-ians can get the services and care they need to stay healthy while making sure that our health care providers are reimbursed for the care they provide.

Beyond the dollars and cents saying no to this revenue stream would be detrimental to [STATE] families, who would gain the peace of mind that if someone in their family loses a job, they will still have affordable coverage while they get back on their feet. Financially secure, healthier [STATE]-ians are more productive, strengthening our state’s economy.

Governor [NAME] must act now because this opportunity is too good for us to pass up. It’s a good deal for our state budget, the people of [STATE] and our future.