

does not strengthen the safety net. The cost of Medicaid in Florida is \$21 billion, and as that share of the budget grows, we have fewer resources to fund other critical needs, such as education and infrastructure. Unlike Washington, Florida has a constitutional requirement to balance our budget.

Medicaid expansion would cost \$1.5 billion annually. A 1% increase in the state sales tax would generate \$1.5 billion annually. The state sales tax is currently 6.5%, and a 1% increase would bring it to 7.5%. This would be a small, targeted increase that would not affect most Floridians. The state sales tax is a regressive tax, meaning it takes a larger percentage of income from lower-income households. A 1% increase would generate \$1.5 billion annually, which would be used to fund Medicaid expansion. This would be a small, targeted increase that would not affect most Floridians.

Some critics have said Florida is leaving billions of dollars of federal funding on the table. The money offered by the federal government to expand Medicaid is not taxes Floridians have already sent to Washington.

Congress has not passed a budget in four years, and each year the federal government spends over a trillion dollars more than it has, leading to a national debt approaching \$17 trillion. Expanding Medicaid would require borrowing more money, drastically expanding our deficit.

As a legislator, citizen, and parent, I cannot support a massive increase to the crippling debt we are passing on to our children.

But instead of simply saying no to Medicaid expansion, the Florida House developed a bill that would have covered parents and disabled adults with incomes under the poverty level who are not eligible for Medicaid. This would have been accomplished within existing state resources.

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I believe this is the responsible way to provide coverage for families in need while acting in the best interests of the state.

A Florida-based think tank, the Heritage Foundation, has argued that Medicaid expansion is a good idea. It would cover 55 million people who are currently not covered. Medicaid expansion would do so in a far more cost-effective way than the current system.

Although this bill did not pass the Legislature this year, we will continue to work on a solution that is driven by the free market, is funded sustainably, and provides the best possible health care to those truly in need.

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According to recent reports, nearly 30 states have either rejected Medicaid expansion or are contemplating rejection.

It is time for the Obama administration to put aside a social agenda and truly give states