



Real Possibilities

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**Guest Editorial –by AARP State Issues Advocacy Director Helen Marks Dicks – 608-286-6337 (cell) – [hmdicks@aarp.org](mailto:hmdicks@aarp.org)**

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*Attention Editor: Listed below is a 458-word guest editorial that I am submitting on behalf of AARP Wisconsin State Issues Advocacy Director Helen Marks Dicks. If you need to verify Helen as the author, please contact her at the phone number/email above. If you have any other questions, please call or email me anytime. Thanks in advance for considering this for publication.*

*Jim Flaherty  
AARP Wisconsin  
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## *The time is now to urge lawmakers to include Medicaid expansion in 2019-21 state budget*

Dear Editor,

I want to be perfectly clear that the issue of whether Wisconsin should accept federal Medicaid expansion funds is not about welfare. It's about wellness and the well-being of all Wisconsin citizens.

Right now Wisconsin is losing out on the potential for a \$1.6 billion infusion of federal funds, which would boost the state economy, create jobs, keep rural hospitals open, and improve the health of all Wisconsinites by adding access to dental care, dementia care specialists, and other vital programs.

Not only would this expansion provide health care for about 82,000 additional Wisconsinites – many of whom are ages 50 to 64 and not offered health care through their employer – but it would improve our entire health care system and stimulate a variety of positive health and economic outcomes for individuals and the state.

For example, new Medicaid expansion enrollees could use their coverage to go to the doctor for preventive care, get the prescriptions they need, and treat

chronic health conditions. By increasing the use of primary care services, Wisconsin can reduce high-cost emergency room visits by the uninsured.

With insurance to cover health care costs, Wisconsinites will have more money in their pockets to spend on other goods and services. And with more people insured, uncompensated care costs would fall – saving hospitals, governments, employers, and taxpayers money.

People with private insurance would also gain financially, since studies show that the states that have accepted Medicaid expansion have seen premiums for private health insurance go down between 7 and 11 percent.

Why would we turn our back on something that would create such positive economic and health outcomes? To me this is the definition of penny wise, pound foolish.

Time is critically important with this issue, as the Legislature is in the process of crafting its version of Wisconsin's 2019-21 state budget. What we need now more than anything is for Wisconsinites to contact their legislators to stress the importance of including full Medicaid expansion in the state budget.

Pressure from constituents can go a long way towards swaying lawmakers' opinions on issues of such critical importance, like this one. We already know that 70 percent of Wisconsinites favor Medicaid expansion, and this support was emphatically repeated time and again at all four state budget hearings in April.

Let your lawmakers know this is a win-win-win for Wisconsin taxpayers, our state's economy, and tens of thousands of hardworking residents who are really struggling just to get by, let alone trying to find affordable health care.

This \$1.6 billion is real money that our state can use to help Wisconsinites live, work, raise families and age with dignity. We look forward to working with the governor and legislature to make this expansion happen.

Sincerely,  
Helen Marks Dicks  
State Issues Advocacy Director  
AARP Wisconsin

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