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Medicaid

Virginia Medicaid Expansion Heads to Governor's Desk

Two bills to expand Medicaid to an additional estimated 300,000 to 400,000 low-income residents are headed to Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's (D) desk, and he is expected to sign both bills.

The Virginia Senate and House of Delegates approved, on a bipartisan basis, two budget bills May 30 with provisions to expand Medicaid.

"This budget is the culmination of five years of effort to bring our taxpayer dollars home from Washington and expand Medicaid," Northam said in a press release May 30. "As a doctor, I'm so proud of the significant step we've taken together to help Virginians get quality, affordable care."

Northam also said he would review the budget and "act upon it as quickly as possible."

The Senate approved a budget bill (H.B. 5001) that included provisions to expand Medicaid with certain work and job training requirements and the companion spending plan (H.B. 5002) by a 23-17 vote. Four Republicans joined the 19 Senate Democrats to approve those two bills.

The House of Delegates approved the budget bill 68-30 and the companion spending plan by 67-31.

Twenty Republicans joined 48 House Democrats to approve the budget bill and 19 Republicans joined to approve the companion spending plan.

The expansion is expected to take effect Jan. 1.

Work Requirements Concern Advocates Even though activists are overwhelmingly positive about the expansion, some are still concerned with the work requirements for some individuals.

"States asking for work requirements in Medicaid claim their programs will help people find jobs and improve their financial security—and that, in turn, will improve their health. There is no evidence to support such claims," Families USA said in a fact sheet.

"Work requirements that have been added to the measure may keep people with disabilities and serious illnesses from getting access to health care," Virginia Organizing Chairperson Del McWhorter said in a press release. "It doesn't make sense to add an unnecessary new layer of bureaucracy to health care funding." The group is dedicated to challenging injustice by empowering people in local communities to address issues that affect the quality of their lives, according to its website.

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