



# ObamaCare Expansion Explosion Demands Action

By Jonathan Ingram and Nic Horton | December 6, 2016

ObamaCare's Medicaid expansion launched less than three years ago, but states have already signed up more able-bodied adults than they ever expected to enroll. Many states have even enrolled more people than they thought would ever even be eligible.

This welfare explosion threatens state funding for public safety, education, infrastructure, and programs for the truly needy. It also increases upward pressure on Congress to act swiftly and repeal the failed law.

In a study published Nov. 16 titled "ObamaCare Expansion Enrollment is Shattering Projections," we found that states have now enrolled more able-bodied adults than they said would ever enroll. And not just slightly — in fact, states have enrolled more than twice as many adults as they expected to ever enroll, at any point in the future.

While some on the left will no doubt point to this enrollment explosion as a sign of immense success, in reality, the explosion has disastrous ramifications for states, taxpayers, and the most vulnerable among us.

Nationwide, nearly 600,000 seniors, children with developmental disabilities, and other needy individuals are on Medicaid waiting lists for community-based services. Some of them have been waiting for more than a decade. Many will pass away before ever receiving the services they desperately need. Instead of providing relief to these truly needy individuals, ObamaCare's expansion moves able-bodied adults to the front of the line. And every penny that's spent to prop up this welfare expansion is a penny that can't go to helping the vulnerable.

This new ObamaCare reality is already setting in, particularly in Arkansas. There, since the state chose to expand Medicaid to able-bodied adults, 79 members of the waiting list have died and 700 more truly needy individuals are now on the list.



One of those waiting is Skylar Overman, a 10-year-old Arkansas girl with a rare neurological condition. She's spent nearly her entire life on a waiting list to get the specialized care she needs. And while nearly 3,000 needy Arkansans like Skylar are left waiting, the state has enrolled roughly 325,000 able-bodied adults in their expansion, moving them to the front of the line.

Along with the enrollment explosion comes widespread cost overruns as well, which worsen the outlook for taxpayers and takes even more resources away from our most vulnerable neighbors.

In Kentucky, officials now report that, rather than save the state money as ObamaCare lobbyists initially promised, Medicaid expansion costs are spiraling out of control and could jeopardize funding for education, pensions, and public safety. Expansion ran an estimated \$3.3 billion over budget in the first two and a half years.

In Colorado, taxpayers have chipped in \$550 million more than expected in its first 18 months. Illinois has enrolled more able-bodied adults than the state thought would ever even be eligible, with costs running \$2 billion over budget during the first two years. In New Mexico, actual costs are 45 percent higher than expected, totaling nearly \$560 million during the first 18 months. And in Ohio, ObamaCare expansion has already run \$4.7 billion over budget and is now on track to run \$8 billion over budget by the end of 2017.

These states are simply a snapshot of a broader national nightmare that's currently unfolding and growing worse every day. It is increasingly clear that something must give — and quickly.

Moving forward, states that have held the line on expansion should take pride in knowing they made the right decision and saved themselves from this nightmare. It is as important as ever that they continue to stand firm. Congress has already passed a bill to repeal expansion funding entirely and Speaker Paul Ryan has long warned states that federal expansion funds more closely resemble a mirage than a commitment.

While last year's repeal effort was thwarted by President Obama, with a new Republican president on the way, next time, it will count.

Congress should also give states clear options to start unwinding this ObamaCare expansion disaster. One mechanism that has worked in the past and can work again would be allowing states to stop new enrollment in their expansions. This would allow current enrollees to gradually leave the program, but, more importantly, it would close the front door to new applicants. It's a fair option for taxpayers who are already footing the bill for more than twice as many enrollees as expected and it's a step towards prioritizing the most vulnerable.



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While ObamaCare expansion enrollment explosion has put policymakers in a terrible bind, these commonsense steps would provide relief to taxpayers and hope to the truly vulnerable. Let's get to work.

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