

To: Missouri House of Representatives
From: Missouri Catholic Conference
RE: Opposition to HJR 117, Annual Appropriation for Expanded Medicaid Population and Work Requirements
Date: February 22, 2022

The Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) respectfully submits this floor letter in opposition to HJR 117 and, in particular, to Sections 36(c) and 36(f) that would make Medicaid funding subject to appropriation and would impose work requirements on recipients aged 19-65.

Making the expanded Medicaid program subject to appropriation would only serve to open the door to reducing benefits to Medicaid recipients in the future. The people of the state of Missouri voted to expand the Medicaid program by approving Amendment 2 in August 2020. Moreover, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled 7-0 that the program must now be funded. The people and the highest court in Missouri have spoken on this issue and the General Assembly should honor these decisions.

The Missouri Catholic Conference also opposes making recipients of Medicaid benefits subject to a work requirement. The MCC believes that there is value and dignity in work, but making recipients of healthcare subject to a work requirement risks undermining the health benefits of the program and recipient's ability to work. The MCC urges the General Assembly to consider the following issues surrounding work requirements for recipients of Medicaid.

Unstable employment: Many Medicaid enrollees work in unstable jobs, such as those in the hospitality, food services, construction, and healthcare industries. These occupations are often subject to varying work hours, including changes in scheduling and seasonal layoffs that could prevent an employee from consistently meeting the 80 hour-per-month work requirement.

Barriers to employment: There are many barriers that exist among low-wage workers seeking employment. These include unreliable transportation, expensive and unstable childcare, chronic illness, or unstable housing. All of these are reasons for periods of unemployment or inability to find work.

Interruptions in health coverage can be detrimental: Coverage losses or interruptions in health coverage can have an adverse impact on health and one's ability to work or to remain employed. It is especially harmful for people with chronic health conditions and other serious health needs that require regular access to medication and other treatments to maintain their health. When recipients lose their health care coverage, the state will face uncompensated care costs as uninsured individuals become reliant on other forms of public care, such as what is provided through emergency rooms.

We urge the Missouri House to vote in opposition to HJR 117.