



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Media Contact:

Kathleen Seeberg, Director of Communications & Media  
Mississippi State Medical Association  
kseeberg@msmaonline.com, 601-853-6733 ext 324, 262-206-6066 (cell)

## THE HEALTHCARE CRISIS IN MISSISSIPPI Mississippi State Medical Association Opinion

**Ridgeland, MS (January 3, 2023)** The lack of access to healthcare for many Mississippians is currently a crisis, not a new crisis, but one that has been fermenting - and is getting worse. As hospitals close across Mississippi, access to life-saving medical care becomes a real threat to all Mississippians. While the debates rage on as to *why* our hospitals are closing, the immediate crisis progressively engulfs us.

Again, the healthcare crisis Mississippi now faces has been foreseeable for years and was indeed predicted. The fact is, there is a sizable *gap* that exists for working Mississippians who cannot afford private health insurance, yet whose income is too much to qualify for Mississippi Medicaid. When these individuals need healthcare, hospitals are required to treat them regardless of their ability to pay. And because these individuals are uninsured, the hospital is not compensated for this necessary care. Such an economical strain on hospitals is one that even the most successful private business could not endure.

*Then COVID-19 hit* - and once again Murphy's Law has proven spot-on. The emergency funds provided by federal agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic are no longer available. Nonetheless, hospitals are overrun with patients who need emergency and inpatient care. If that were not enough, since the COVID-19 pandemic, Mississippi hospitals are now facing higher staffing costs, staffing shortages, and higher costs of goods and supplies while continuing to meet the healthcare needs of patients.

As such, Mississippi is now witnessing the result of a simple economic fact: When cash-out exceeds cash-in, any business will fail! While access to and delivery of healthcare is indeed a complex subject - and *access does not guarantee delivery*, there are reasonable actions our state leaders and legislators can consider to avert a looming disaster. The following actions are reasonable - and beneficial to our entire state - and they need to be organized and implemented quickly:

1. Raise the income eligibility for Medicaid;
2. Offset "taxes" hospitals currently pay;
3. "Restructure" healthcare delivery across Mississippi, which may include strategically located critical access hospitals, emergency care, etc. and a re-structured referral system to hospitals when higher levels of care are required;
4. Consider Arkansas model to provide access to care for working Mississippians through the purchase of *private* insurance for qualified recipients; and
5. Enhance preventative care measures for all Medicaid recipients by implementing an "accountable care" payment model.

An overhaul of Mississippi's current system of healthcare is unmistakably essential. MSMA stands with all Mississippians to call upon our state leaders to promptly address our healthcare crisis.

###

The Mississippi State Medical Association is the largest physician advocacy organization in Mississippi, representing nearly 5,000 physicians and medical students. Since 1856, MSMA has been a trusted health policy leader and professional development resource for physicians, representing the unified voice of physicians statewide on state and federal health care issues while providing information needed to navigate health care legislation and regulatory changes.

Mississippi State Medical Association

408 West Parkway Place, Ridgeland, MS 39157 | (601) 853-6733 | MSMAonline.com