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QuickPoint! – Taxpayers Ultimately Get the Bill for Oregon’s Medicaid Expansion

By Thomas Tullis

Thirty states have already undertaken the Medicaid expansion encouraged by the Affordable Care Act. In Oregon, [more than one in 4 people are now enrolled in Medicaid](#). Enrollment is nearly twice as high as originally thought, and now lawmakers are looking at a half-billion-dollar state deficit after grossly miscalculating the projection.

In an attempt to reconcile the \$300 million Cover Oregon fiasco, the Kitzhaber administration had centered in on fast-track Medicaid enrollment. Oregonians were incentivized and encouraged to sign up for Medicaid, with ObamaCare extending the eligibility requirements to adults earning up to 138% of the federal poverty level.

With the expansion’s [76% increase in monthly enrollment](#), Oregon’s growth is second only to Kentucky’s. While many states have not expanded and have seen little to no growth in enrollment, [Oregon boasts some of the highest percentages](#) of average annual growth in Medicaid spending over the last few years.

As the federal government will soon require Oregon and other states to be responsible for part of Medicaid costs, lawmakers are already talking about increasing the nearly [two-billion-dollar bipartisan hospital tax](#) that Governor Kate Brown signed in March.

Health insurance policy is in desperate need of market-based reforms. A competitive free market can ensure quality and affordability. Government handouts and regulations simply drive up costs that in this case will be borne by taxpayers.

Thomas Tullis is a research associate at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon’s free market think tank. He is a student at the University of Oregon, where he is studying Journalism and Political Science.