

**Written Testimony for Oral presentation by *Olson Huff, MD FAAP***

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For more than thirty-five years I have provided health care to countless children in North Carolina and have entered the lives of their families in substantial and enduring ways. I have seen them at their best and their worst. In those years, I have learned many things. Three stand out:

1. When ill, there is a desire to be well.
2. When injured, there is a desire to be mended.
3. When in pain there is a desire for relief.

My task as a medical practitioner has been to address those issues and to bring a resolution to those desires whenever and wherever possible. To do so required me, and all my fellow medical colleagues, to rely on an extensive network of health care resources. Chief among those resources is and has been the economic strength necessary to support an ever-expanding medical system engaged in technological, scientific and educational advances.

From my perspective as a medical practitioner, I wish to address two specific issues affecting children and their families in North Carolina and the economics surrounding them.

They are:

1. Medicaid Expansion
2. Premature births

Let me first state that these two issues are only a fraction of the many faces of health care today and both are centered squarely in the center of preventive care, a must if health care costs are to be reduced.

Medicaid expansion in North Carolina. This opportunity of the ACA would have produced 25,000 jobs in North Carolina, added between 1.2 and 1.7 billion dollars to the GDP of the state and provided badly needed health care access to 500,000 uninsured citizens. This would have been a bold step for prevention as the most reliable index of better health and therefore decreased medical costs is reliable access to health care.

Premature births. In North Carolina each year, approximately 122,000 babies are born. At the last counting, 15,569 of those were born too early. Not to even mention the human cost and impact on the economic and emotional health of a family with a

premature baby, the average cost of caring for that baby is about \$50,000.00 compared to \$4550.00 for a full term healthy infant.

The figures speak for themselves. Improved access to care, and a reliable resource to pay for it yields better health, better prenatal and infant care, a lowered rate of premature births and a healthier and more dependable work force to drive the engines of commerce our state so badly needs.

Expanding Medicaid is one easily achievable way to guarantee that access to a population most likely to benefit and thus most likely improve the economic bottom line that will add greatly to the future needs and development of all of North Carolina's citizens.

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