

Republican-rule has worsened the impact of COVID-19 for North Carolinians due to the failure to expand Medicaid, cuts to NCHHS's budget, and cuts to unemployment insurance.

Republicans blocked Medicaid Expansion leaving uninsured people with few options to pay for treatment. Governor Cooper called on Republican leaders to expand Medicaid in the budget as part of a compromise plan, but they refused. According to analysis from the Peterson Center and KFF treatment for severe cases of COVID-19 could top \$20,000. Months after Gov. Cooper vetoed the Republican budget because it failed to expand Medicaid, House leaders called a surprise vote to override his veto instead of negotiating on Medicaid.

The failure to expand Medicaid put rural communities at risk, as hospitals close and people are forced to travel far distances for treatment. The State legislature's failure to expand Medicaid forced many rural hospitals to close. 30 percent of NC's rural hospitals are vulnerable to closure according to a Chartis Center study. The rural hospital closure crisis has impacted non-Medicaid expansion states much more than states that have expanded Medicaid. **Without hospitals, rural communities are more vulnerable to coronavirus spread and are forced to travel far distances to get treatment.**

Republicans in the House and Senate voted for a budget that cut NCDHHS by \$42M resulting in staff cuts that would have undermined the state's ability to test and treat coronavirus patients. DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen called the cuts "dramatic" and "irresponsible."

Republicans made major cuts to unemployment insurance, meaning NC cannot do enough to help people who have lost jobs and face months of unemployment due to coronavirus. In 2013 Republicans voted for unemployment insurance reform that denied \$780M in federal unemployment insurance to those who lost their jobs. The 2013 law capping unemployment benefits at \$350 means North Carolinians cannot tap into some federal benefits and do not benefit from changes to unemployment at the federal level. North Carolina ranked 48th out of 50 states in unemployment benefits and is one of only two states where benefits only last 12 weeks. **The average weekly unemployment benefit in NC is \$277 while the average weekly wage is \$986.**

Republicans blocked Medicaid Expansion leaving uninsured people with few options to pay for treatment.

HEADLINE: "New General Assembly budget includes many health care features, but no Medicaid expansion" (NC Health News, [6/26/19](#))

Governor Cooper called on Republican leaders to expand Medicaid in the budget as part of a compromise plan. "After several weeks of negotiations between the North Carolina Senate and the House of Representatives, the two chambers came together Tuesday to present a compromise budget they'll be sending to Gov. Roy Cooper for his signature. But it's likely Cooper will be vetoing it. For months, the governor has signaled that he would veto any state spending plan which does not contain provisions to expand the Medicaid program to cover hundreds of thousands of additional low-income workers who would become eligible under expansion. That likelihood loomed large over Tuesday's press conference, where Republican leaders of the House and the Senate stood together and criticized Cooper for not negotiating with them around the \$24 billion spending plan." (NC Health News, [6/26/19](#))

The cost of coronavirus treatment is estimated at up to \$20,000.

According to analysis from the Peterson Center and KFF treatment for severe cases of COVID-19 could top \$20,000. "A new analysis from the Peterson Center on Healthcare and KFF found that the cost of treatment for severe cases of COVID-19 could top \$20,000, and that people with insurance could face out-of-pocket costs exceeding \$1,300." (AARP, [3/18/20](#))

Months after Gov. Cooper vetoed the Republican budget because it failed to expand Medicaid, House leaders called a surprise vote to override his veto instead of negotiating on Medicaid.

HEADLINE: “‘How dare you do this, Mr. Speaker’: In surprise move, House overrides budget veto” (WRAL, [9/11/19](#))

HEADLINE: “‘Trickery, deception and lies:’ Gov. Cooper blasts Republicans after surprise vote on budget veto override” (WTVD, [9/11/19](#))

EDITORIAL: “Speaker Moore’s ‘half-filled chamber win’ is empty victory” (CBC, Editorial, [9/26/19](#))

The House voted to override Gov. Cooper’s veto of the 2019 budget in “an early-morning move” when only about half of the members were present to vote. “In an early-morning move that shocked and angered Democrats in the chamber, the N.C. House of Representatives voted to override Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto of the state budget. Just over half of the 120 members were present to vote. Rep. Jason Saine, a Lincolnton Republican, made the motion to reconsider the state budget, and chaos in the chamber quickly ensued. Democrats in the chamber vehemently objected to the bill being brought up, saying they were told there would be no votes during the 8:30 a.m. session and that the session was just a formality so work could begin. House Speaker Tim Moore, a Kings Mountain Republican, denied that such an announcement was made, and even asked the House Clerk to back him up. That prompted an outburst from Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover.” (News & Observer, [9/11/19](#))

Gov. Cooper and Democrats were using the budget veto as leverage in an attempt to expand Medicaid. “Cooper and legislative Democrats have used the budget veto as leverage in an attempt to force Medicaid expansion in the GOP-majority General Assembly. Republican leaders have said previously that a House vote on a Republican-authored Medicaid expansion proposal would go in tandem with a veto override, but Cooper said he has neither seen nor heard of any pending action on the so-called “Carolina Cares” legislation.” (WRAL, [9/11/19](#))

Democrats were told there would be no votes during the 8:30 a.m. session on September 11, but Republicans denied making such a statement. “In an early-morning move that shocked and angered Democrats in the chamber, the N.C. House of Representatives voted to override Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto of the state budget. Just over half of the 120 members were present to vote. Rep. Jason Saine, a Lincolnton Republican, made the motion to reconsider the state budget, and chaos in the chamber quickly ensued. Democrats in the chamber vehemently objected to the bill being brought up, saying they were told there would be no votes during the 8:30 a.m. session and that the session was just a formality so work could begin. House Speaker Tim Moore, a Kings Mountain Republican, denied that such an announcement was made, and even asked the House Clerk to back him up. That prompted an outburst from Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover.” (News & Observer, [9/11/19](#))

Rep. David Lewis said he never told Democrats there would be no votes, but acknowledged telling a WRAL reporter there would be no votes at 8:30. “Jackson, D-Wake, said he then told his caucus they didn’t need to be on the floor Wednesday morning and could instead prepare for redistricting meetings and other legislative business planned for the day. Lewis, R-Harnett, said he never told Jackson there would be no votes on Wednesday morning, saying that he told him the House wouldn’t vote on two “mini-budget” bills added to the floor calendar that would provide money for disaster relief and for prison safety upgrades until after House Democrats caucused Wednesday morning. Lewis did acknowledge telling a WRAL News reporter via text Tuesday night that there would be no votes at the 8:30 a.m. session. But he said that’s because he didn’t think there would be any. He wasn’t on the floor during the override vote.” (WRAL, [9/11/19](#))

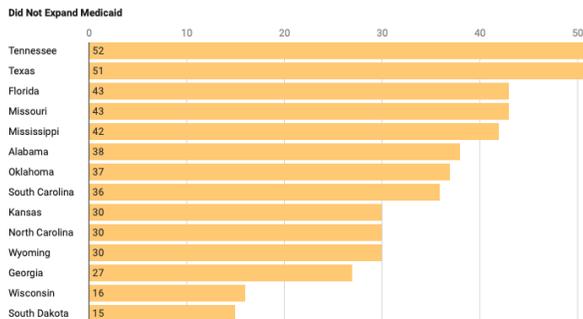
The failure to expand Medicaid put rural communities at risk, as hospitals close and people are forced to travel far distances for treatment.

The State Legislature's failure to expand Medicaid forced many rural hospitals to close.

HEADLINE: "New General Assembly budget includes many health care features, but no Medicaid expansion" (NC Health News, [6/26/19](#))

30 percent of NC's rural hospitals are vulnerable to closure according to a Chartis Center study. (Daily Yonder, [2/27/20](#))

Percent of Vulnerable Rural Hospitals



The rural hospital closure crisis has impacted non-Medicaid expansion states much more than states that have expanded Medicaid. "The Chartis study and an earlier study by the University of North Carolina's Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research found that most hospitals at the risk of closure are in states that did not expand Medicaid, as allowed under the Affordable Care Act. "The closure crisis has affected rural hospitals located in non-Medicaid expansion states much more so than in states that have expanded Medicaid," the report said. "Our regression model showed that being located in a Medicaid expansion state decreases the likelihood of closure by 62 percent on average." (Daily Yonder, [2/27/20](#))

Without hospitals, rural communities are more vulnerable to coronavirus spread and are forced to travel far distances to get treatment.

North Carolina has lost four rural hospitals since Republicans took control in 2010. "North Carolina has lost four rural hospitals. Pungo District Hospital and Yadkin Valley Community Hospital closed while the hospital in Blowing Rock was converted into a nursing home. And in 2015 Franklin Medical Center in Louisburg closed but that facility is scheduled to reopen in 2018 due to a lease agreement with Maria Parham Health, which is part of Duke LifePoint Healthcare. According to a report by WTVD-TV, Franklin Medical Center will be an extension of Duke LifePoint's Henderson hospital. It will operate as an 24/7 emergency department and will include behavioral health services. A fifth North Carolina hospital, Morehead Memorial in Eden, is currently in bankruptcy." (NC Health News, [9/29/17](#))

When a hospital leaves a community, so do other health care specialists. "Many other types of specialists tend to cluster around hospitals. When a hospital leaves a community, so can many of those specialists. Care for mental health and substance use are among those most likely to be in short supply after rural hospital closures." (NY Times, [10/29/18](#))

Greater travel time to hospitals is associated with higher mortality, especially for heart patients and trauma patients. "The closure of trauma centers has also accelerated since 2001, and disproportionately in rural areas, according to a study in Health Affairs. The resulting increased travel time for trauma cases heightens the risk of adverse outcomes, including death. Another study found that greater travel time to hospitals is associated with higher mortality rates for coronary artery bypass graft patients." (NY Times, [10/29/18](#))

Republicans in the House and Senate voted for a budget that cut NCDHHS by \$42M resulting in staff cuts that would have undermined the state's ability to test and treat coronavirus patients.

The 2019 Republican budget would cut \$42 million in recurring funds for DHHS over two years. “Cohen also sharply criticized the legislature for cutting out \$42 million in recurring administrative funds over the coming two years. Additionally, she said that as the budget stands right now, the Medicaid budget is \$63 million short.” (NC Health News, [6/28/19](#); H966, vetoed, [6/28/19](#))

DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen called the cuts “dramatic” and “irresponsible.” ““It’s dramatic. It’s irresponsible,” she said. “It’s not like we’re trying to manage some really trying times. No one has given me an answer in this building about why are we doing this cut? “We’re not in a recession. Why are they doing it this year... other than to play games?” Cohen said.” (NC Health News, [6/28/19](#); H966, vetoed, [6/28/19](#))

Republicans made major cuts to unemployment insurance, meaning NC cannot do enough to help people who have lost jobs and face months of unemployment due to coronavirus.

In 2013 Republicans voted for unemployment insurance reform that denied \$780M in federal unemployment insurance to those who lost their jobs.

In 2013 Republicans cut unemployment and denied federal benefits. NC was the only state to deny the federal benefits. “That left Berger and Tillis with an additional decision last summer: Delay the unemployment insurance reforms until Jan. 1, 2014, and the federal government would send \$780 million to unemployed North Carolinians in the last half of 2013. Instead, the legislature made the changes immediate, making North Carolina the only state to deny the federal benefits. Not surprisingly, that didn’t make it into the Berger/Tillis statement Monday.” (Charlotte Observer, 1/8/14; H4, adopted [2/19/13](#))

Charlotte Observer: Republicans “ultimately allowed North Carolinians to be denied \$780 million in federal unemployment benefits last year.” “In a lengthy statement Monday, N.C. Senate leader Phil Berger and House Speaker Thom Tillis blamed U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan, a Democrat, for not helping the state’s long-term unemployed by failing to persuade Congress to grandfather North Carolina’s anticipated unemployment insurance reforms back in 2012. “She dropped the ball,” the Republicans said. This narrative, which Republicans have pushed before, is more revisionist than reality. It ignores that Berger and Tillis – who hopes to unseat Hagan in November – ultimately allowed North Carolinians to be denied \$780 million in federal unemployment benefits last year.” (Charlotte Observer, 1/8/14; H4, adopted [2/19/13](#))

The 2013 law capping unemployment benefits at \$350 means North Carolinians cannot tap into some federal benefits and do not benefit from changes to unemployment at the federal level.

The \$350 cap on unemployment means North Carolinians do not benefit from changes to unemployment made at the federal level. “As part of the reform, weekly benefits were capped at \$350 and the duration was reduced to 12 weeks from 26 weeks. Quinterno said the \$350 cap is particularly important because even with supplemental benefits included in the \$2 trillion federal recovery plan — \$600 weekly for up to 12 weeks — the base for North Carolinians weakens the impact compared with other states. States will also have the option to enter into an agreement with the federal government for an additional 13 weeks of compensation if they have exhausted their state benefits, he noted.” (Charlotte Business Journal, [3/26/20](#))

North Carolina ranked 48th out of 50 states in unemployment benefits and is one of only two states where benefits only last 12 weeks.

North Carolina ranked 48th among the 50 states in unemployment benefits and near the bottom in average duration of benefits. “Citing data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the left-leaning Budget & Tax Center, part of the North Carolina Justice Center in Raleigh, in round numbers, 10% of North Carolina workers received unemployment benefits last year, 48th among the 50 states. Before 2013, it

was 40%, in the middle of the pack nationally. North Carolina also ranks near the bottom in average unemployment duration — just under nine weeks — and average weekly benefits. The latter figure is \$277, compared with an average weekly wage of \$986, according to the Budget & Tax Center analysis of federal data.” (Charlotte Business Journal, [3/26/20](#))

North Carolina and Florida are the only two states that provide only 12 weeks of unemployment benefits. “Florida currently provides up to 12 weeks of UI; and North Carolina currently provides up to 12 weeks of UI.” (CBPP, [4/13/20](#))

The average weekly unemployment benefit in NC is \$277 while the average weekly wage is \$986.

The average weekly unemployment benefit in North Carolina is \$277 and is capped at \$350. Meanwhile, the average weekly wage is \$986. “As part of the reform, weekly benefits were capped at \$350 and the duration was reduced to 12 weeks from 26 weeks. [...] North Carolina also ranks near the bottom in average unemployment duration — just under nine weeks — and average weekly benefits. The latter figure is \$277, compared with an average weekly wage of \$986, according to the Budget & Tax Center analysis of federal data.” (Charlotte Business Journal, [3/26/20](#))

###