Maine Center for Economic Policy

MECEP Matters

May 2017

State Budget Negotiations Come Down to the Wire

The final days of negotiations on the state budget are at hand. Unfortunately, the education funding, which voters approved last November, hangs in the balance. Not only are the new revenues to reach the state's mandated share of 55% of local education funding in jeopardy, but so too is everything MECEP and our partners have worked for over the last two years to improve tax fairness. MECEP continues to work furiously so that lawmakers have the information they need to make sound policy choices.

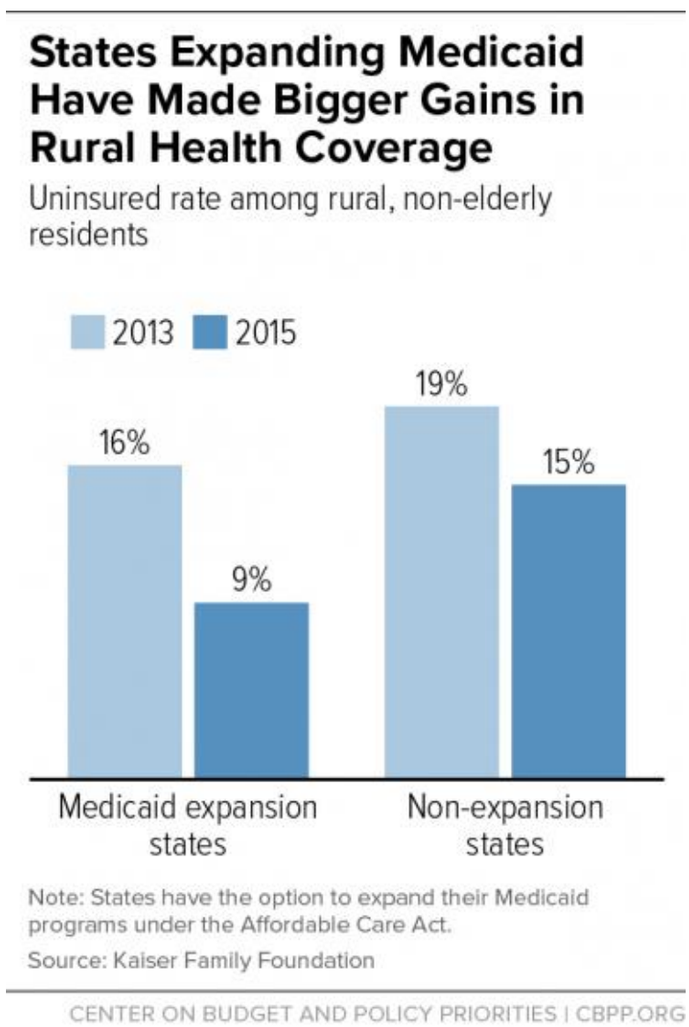
Stay tuned for MECEP's analysis of the final budget agreement.

GOP's American Health Care Act Would Devastate Health Care in Rural Maine

The American Health Care Act (AHCA), as passed by the US House of Representatives in May, would wreak havoc to Mainers' health.

The AHCA would undermine the health care system in Maine by allowing age-based price discrimination by insurers and granting states the ability to waive requirements to cover pre-existing conditions.

The AHCA would also take away Maine's ability to benefit from Medicaid expansion. In the 31 states that have adopted it (Maine is not one of them), Medicaid expansion has particularly benefited non-elderly, rural residents including self-employed farmers and fishermen by giving them access to health care.

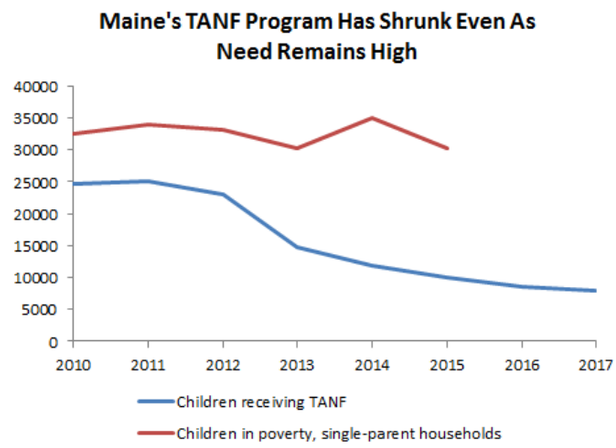


The latest health care proposal in Congress is a bad

deal for rural Mainers who are less likely to have health insurance, and more likely to have serious health conditions.

Read More

LIFT Bill Will Reduce Child Poverty and Create Opportunity for Maine Families



Maine has turned its back on its neediest citizens. There are 30,000 Maine children with single parents who are living in poverty, yet the number who qualify for much-needed financial assistance is just one quarter what it was in 2010. At the same time, the administration has sequestered tens of millions of federal funds intended to meet the basic needs of these families. A new bill in the legislature attempts to use these funds to address some of the many barriers faced by parents and children in poverty. It will help families overcome obstacles to their employment by providing access to education, affordable car ownership, child care, and stable housing.

The strength of Maine's economy is dependent on the ability of all residents to participate and thrive. Ensuring that Mainers in poverty have routes to employment is critical to an economy that works for everyone.

See MECEP's Analysis of this Bill

Featured Blog Post

James Myall's May 11 blog post shows that state policies have contributed to the disturbing escalation in child poverty in Maine.

DHHS denies the facts, misappropriates funds Congress authorized to fight Maine's soaring child poverty

Visit MECEP's Blog

MECEP's Analysis of Proposed MaineCare Work Requirements

Facts and Figures

Maine's Department of Health and Human Services is seeking an unprecedented waiver from the federal government to impose work requirements, monthly premiums, and a variety of fees on most non-elderly, adult MaineCare recipients who don't qualify for disability coverage. These changes will undermine the basic principles of the Medicaid program, cause unnecessary hardships to tens of thousands of Mainers, and hurt Maine's economy. Here are the facts:

30,000 – number of Mainers impacted

75% – percent of survey respondents who said access to Medicaid helped them get a job

40% – percent of those impacted who would be disqualified even when they work part-time, part-year, or simply can't find a job

50% – percent of Mainers impacted who worked within the past year

85% – percent of Mainers impacted who only has a high school diploma

1 in 3 – number of Mainer's impacted who has a physical or mental disability but do not qualify for disability coverage under MaineCare's strict rules

1 in 8 – number of Mainers impacted who has no vehicle

MECEP in the News

In case you missed them, MECEP's analyses were used by journalists and bloggers and television and radio news to inform public debate:

Cutting aid to poor people doesn't magically make them less poor
May 25, 2017 - Bangor Daily News
From 2011 to 2015, the proportion of Maine children living in extreme poverty (family earnings of less than $10,000 per year), grew at eight times the national average, according to data from the Maine Center for Economic Policy.

WZON-AM interview with James Myall on health care
May 18, 2017 - WZON-AM/FM
The Pulse Morning Show interviewed James Myall about how the American Health Care Act (AHCA), as passed by the US House of Representatives, threatens the health of tens of thousands of rural Mainers, as well as the finances of Maine hospitals.

Maine governor attacks effort to help families in poverty
May 15, 2017 - Rewire
LePage's policies have resulted in 14,550 fewer children receiving help from TANF....The number of Maine children living in deep poverty is now eight times worse than the national average, according to the Maine Center for Economic Policy.

A student loan should not mean a lifetime of debt. Maine lawmakers can help.
May 13, 2017 - Bangor Daily News
With the explosion of student debt also comes the private interests who exploit it. Predatory practices by student loan servicers—those companies that manage payment plans and collect on debt owed—force many former Maine students to pay more than they have to and cheat them into delinquency or default.

It's not surprising LePage is upset about a welfare bill that actually helps poor people
May 13, 2017 - Bangor Daily News

Data from the U.S. Census' American Community Survey, compiled by the Maine Center for Economic Policy, show that the proportion of Maine children growing up in extreme poverty—in households with income less than half the federal poverty level, about $10,000 annually for a family of three—has been on the rise in recent years while it's generally held steady nationally.

Maine Republicans have chosen new tax breaks for the wealthy as their hill to die on
May 12, 2017 – Bangor Daily News Blog By Mike Tipping
Working and middle-class people understand, on a fundamental level, that the tax system is biased against them, and they're absolutely right. In fact, even with…the new 3% surcharge on income over $200,000, Maine's wealthiest 1% are still paying a lower effective tax rate than the middle class.

There's no doubt Maine has unspent federal cash. The fight is over how to use it.
May 10, 2017 - Bangor Daily News
Gideon claims the number of Maine children in extreme poverty—families living at 50 percent of the federal poverty level of $10,000 per year for a family of three or lower—is increasing eight times faster than the national average. That number comes from an analysis of census data by the left-leaning Maine Center for Economic Policy.

Workforce bill takes aim at skills gap in Maine
May 5, 2017 - Maine Biz
A bill by state Senator Eloise Vitelli would expand and strengthen the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program that helps low-income, underemployed, and unemployed workers acquire new skills needed to obtain good-paying jobs in growing industries. The bill received the support of the Maine Center for Economic Policy.

Change the narrative on local budgets
May 2, 2017 - Central Maine Morning Sentinel/Kennebec Journal
The governor proudly announced the state has a billion dollars in cash, and the Maine Center for Economic Policy discovered...$2 billion of federal money he left on the table.

MECEP Matters is a monthly update on MECEP's work. If you know someone who is passionate about economic justice or interested in economic issues, please forward this email and encourage them to subscribe.

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