

## Gov. Matt Bevin on Medicaid waiver at Kentucky Chamber of Commerce meeting, 7/12/19

### Transcript by Kentucky Health News

“Is there anyone in this room that thinks it is a good idea for able-bodied, working-age men and women between the ages of 19 and 64 who have no dependents – and they’re able-bodied, they’re healthy – and they choose not to work? How many of you think it’s a good idea for you to subsidize them and allow them no to work? Anybody? That’s what Andy Beshear believes. I don’t. That’s what his father believed. I don’t. We’re not helping people by that.

“I grew up in poverty. I grew up well below the poverty level, actually. I know for a fact from personal experience – I’m not sympathetic to people in need – I never had any access to any health care as a kid. I have scars on my body that are as thick as a finger that would have been sown shut if we could have afforded it; I have fingers that are crooked because we fixed ‘em at home when they broke. I know that world. I’m empathetic to that world, not sympathetic. But I know for a fact that if you give people something when they don’t need it, in the case of these able-bodied people, you don’t have it to provide to the people who do need it. Medicaid was intended for the medically frail, for pregnant women, for children, for people who have disabilities that preclude them from doing the things that able-bodied, working-age people can do. We are blessed to live in a country where we can afford to have that kind of safety net, but every dollar we provide to someone like myself who just chooses not to work is a dollar we don’t have to people for whom it was intended.

“And it also sets a bad precedent. It creates a sense of entitlement and expectation, and it sets a bad example for next generations of children who see their parents not going to work, and working the system. There are hundreds of thousands of people in this state that could be going to work, should be going to work, and choose not to go to work. That is their prerogative; they can choose that, but you should not be expected to subsidize that choice if they could choose otherwise.\*

“And this waiver that I’ve asked for is a simple one. I’ve simply said that somebody who is able-bodied, working age, has no children, should do one of five things, because the American dream is a real thing, and the on-ramp to the American dream should be made available to everybody. And so by simply requiring someone who gets free health care – better than frankly many of you and your employees have; trust me, Medicaid is more comprehensive than you realize, and many of your companies don’t even offer the same benefits Medicaid does – but in exchange for that, for free, to no cost to the individual, they should do one of five things I have proposed for 20 hours a week, four hours a day, five days a week: work, go to school, volunteer, be in training for a specific job, take care of somebody that the state would otherwise be paying for to be taken care of. Don’t tell me that that’s not possible in every community. One or more of those things is possible in every community in Kentucky. And it is, I think, morally irresponsible if we don’t expect people to do what other people are paying to give them something that they themselves may or may not even have.

“So it is hung up in the courts, and it shouldn’t be. There’s a single judge in Washington, D.C., who has made it his own personal determination to shut down any effort to change things in Kentucky. I’ll bet he’s never even been to Kentucky. It will go to the U.S. Supreme Court. If for some reason it’s not upheld – and I’m highly confident it will be, and we’ll be in the right – then we will not have expanded Medicaid if I’m the governor. You should not be paying for people who choose not to work when you desperately need people to come to work. You just shouldn’t.”

*\*The governor’s office said later, “The estimated number of Kentuckians who do not have a disability and are not in the labor force is 443,723 with a margin of error of +/-10,630. This means the Census estimates the number is between 433,093 and 454,353 (Data Source: 2017 American Community Survey 1 Year Estimates, Table B18120).”*