



Stacey Abrams has a vision for Georgia where all Georgians have the freedom and opportunity to thrive. A critical component of that vision is ensuring that Georgians can access quality, affordable health care in every region of our state.

As a tax attorney, Stacey developed a specialty in hospitals and health care finance, and she leveraged that experience as House Democratic Leader. She consistently engaged with Georgians in rural, suburban, and urban communities alike to protect our community hospitals and to expand and improve healthcare access in Georgia. She introduced legislation to expand Medicaid, and she led the House Democratic Caucus in a statewide campaign to raise awareness about its importance. As a civic leader, she founded a program to sign up low-income Georgians for the Affordable Care Act across 39 counties in South and Middle Georgia.

In addition, Abrams spearheaded critical legislation to combat the misclassification of workers as independent contractors, which denied them access to employer-based health insurance.

### **Stacey Abrams for Governor: Health Care Platform**

As Governor, Stacey Abrams will fight for quality health care and better health outcomes for all Georgians. Her Health Care Platform has seven pillars:

1. Medicaid expansion to cover nearly 500,000 more Georgians, save rural hospitals, and generate 56,000 new jobs across the state.
2. Protection of the Affordable Care Act and creation of the Georgia Premium Stability Program to lower premiums for self-employed Georgians.
3. Stronger mental health and substance abuse networks.
4. Protection of women's health.
5. Expanded services for seniors, including prioritization of Alzheimer's research.
6. Increased support for individuals with disabilities.
7. Strategies targeted at addressing rural health care gaps.

## **MEDICAID EXPANSION**

Over 30 states, led by governors across the political spectrum, have taken the only justifiable approach to health care and expanded Medicaid already. But not Georgia. Our Republican state leaders refuse to act, needlessly turning down federal dollars while Georgia sends money to Washington and to other states that have accepted the program. Refusing to expand Medicaid is an irresponsible act that denies coverage for hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Georgians who need health coverage, damaging our health infrastructure and our rural health system to its core.

Stacey Abrams led the fight to expand Medicaid in the legislature and will make it a top focus as governor. Medicaid expansion will draw \$3 billion annually (\$8 million per day) into our state to pay for doctors, nurses, and hospitals. It will create 56,000 jobs—60% of which will be outside of Metro Atlanta. It will help local economies, reduce uncompensated care that drives up costs for all Georgians, benefit employers with healthier workers, and save rural hospitals from closure. And that only scratches the surface of the benefits of Medicaid expansion.

Medicaid expansion works in other states and will work in Georgia. More than 200 studies find that Medicaid expansion creates:

- Lower rates of uninsured citizens.
- Major employment gains (e.g. 31,000 jobs in Colorado; 40,000 jobs in Kentucky).
- Coverage gains for young adults, veterans, parents, people with HIV, and low-wage workers.
- Drastic help for rural areas. Uninsured rates in rural areas of expansion states drop faster than uninsured rates in all other areas, expansion and non-expansion states alike.
- Consistent care for chronic conditions.
- Greater access to mental health treatment.
- Increased access to medications for opioid use disorder and overdose.
- Improved quality of care in community health centers.
- Greater affordability and financial security among low-income households.

## **AFFORDABLE CARE ACT PROTECTION & GEORGIA PREMIUM STABILITY PROGRAM**

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has been vital to helping many Georgians obtain necessary health coverage. When Leader Abrams saw that Georgia was not funding sufficient outreach during open enrollment for the ACA, she led the members of the Georgia House Democratic Caucus to host open enrollment sessions, teaching constituents how to enroll. She personally

conducted such outreach in Republican-held districts, and her nonprofit, the New Georgia Project, hired canvassers in rural South and Middle Georgia to do the same. As governor she will continue to champion the ACA, and the state government will ensure that all Georgians know how to use the ACA exchange to enroll in an ACA health plan.

However, the ACA must continue to improve access to insurance. Georgia's premiums have risen by 50% in recent years, and our state leaders must be innovative to stop these skyrocketing costs for self-employed Georgians. Abrams will push for a federal 1332 State Innovation Waiver to create the Georgia Premium Stability Program—keeping more money in the pockets of individuals in every region of Georgia. A handful of states are already using such flexibilities within the ACA to create reinsurance programs, offering stability for premiums in the individual market by leveraging federal dollars to cover some costs for high-cost conditions.<sup>i</sup> In Alaska and Minnesota—two of the first states to create a reinsurance program—premiums are actually going down, falling by 22% in Alaska and 13% in Minnesota in the first year.<sup>ii</sup> Additionally, expanding Medicaid would help lower premiums for all Georgians: research shows that Medicaid expansion can lower average monthly premiums in the private individual market by 7 to 11%.<sup>iii</sup>

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT**

Mental health care access and substance abuse treatment are increasingly critical components of health care that are too often overlooked and underfunded. Georgia ranks as the 8<sup>th</sup> worst state for access to mental health care. We are in the bottom five states for number of mental health providers per capita.<sup>iv</sup> Almost half of our counties lacked a licensed psychologist and nearly a third of our counties lacked a licensed social worker in 2015.<sup>v</sup>

As Governor, Abrams will:

- Work with the mental health community to increase understanding and reduce stigma regarding mental health disabilities. We will make sure Georgians know that mental health has no zip code, and there is no shame in mental illness.
- Increase access to treatment through Medicaid expansion and support a more integrated vision of mental health services with primary-care health systems.
- Support the Recovery Orientated Care approaches already underway in Georgia's behavioral health community. These approaches move our focus from crisis to prevention and recognize the importance of community and hope.
- Support peer-to-peer support systems for adults, youth, and families and encourage public-private partnerships to provide innovations and improvements in mental health services.
- Encourage tele-health and other innovations to better meet needs for services across the state.

- Focus on treatment—not imprisonment. Our criminal justice platform calls for more accountability courts, better re-entry services, and community policing that can include CIT training for law enforcement.
- Focus on the whole child to include mental health. We must follow up on our initial steps in addressing mental health for children to ensure a complete system. Where a teacher or counselor identifies a child with a mental health need, they will have a place to refer the child.
- Support more training opportunities throughout our systems – law enforcement, teachers and counselors, nurses, mental health professionals, pediatricians – and expand incentives for practitioners to locate throughout the state.

## **WOMEN’S HEALTH**

- **Maternal Health.** Stacey Abrams will work to address Georgia’s high maternal and infant mortality rates.

More than half of Georgia counties do not have an OB-GYN provider, 64 lack a pediatrician, and our state has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the nation. Abrams understands a holistic approach to increasing access to high quality care is needed to provide better outcomes for our mothers and babies. Funding rural hospitals via Medicaid expansion is a crucial first step in addressing this issue. Stacey will also leverage state and federal programs to incentivize more doctors and medical personnel to locate in under-served areas and reduce our maternal and infant mortality rates.

- **Reproductive health.** Stacey Abrams helped lead the fight to protect reproductive health care access in Georgia and will continue to stand firm for reproductive rights as governor.

Under Stacey’s leadership, no TRAP (Targeted Restrictions on Abortion Providers) legislation has passed Georgia, and she has been recognized as a Living Legend by Planned Parenthood of the Southeast, a recipient of the national Champion for Women’s Health Award from Planned Parenthood Action Fund and received local support from the Feminist Women’s Health Center.

## **SENIOR HEALTH**

As Governor, Stacey will work on behalf of seniors to make Georgia a place where seniors can maintain their quality of life and receive the supports they need as they age. Georgia has one of the nation’s fastest growing senior populations, which means that we must pay close attention to access to health care. While most seniors rely on Medicare, for hundreds of thousands of seniors, Medicaid serves as a critical source of health coverage, providing the funds for nursing homes and other long-term care. In addition, senior health investments must recognize the physical and economic challenges of growing older, especially in rural Georgia. She will:

- Help more seniors age in place. We will strengthen the state’s commitment to the Aging and Disability Resource Centers, which offer critical connections between seniors and community services. Additionally, we will devote resources to the Community Care Services program and Home and Community Based Service program to cut wait times and waitlists for services such as home health aides, delivered meals, and personal care needs. Medicaid often funds a portion of these services, which is why expansion is critical to our growing senior population.
- Increase access to transportation. We will champion more reliable, efficient non-emergency medical transportation to ensure seniors and others can get to their medical appointments. Additionally, we will promote local efforts to launch volunteer driver programs.
- Expand insurance options for younger seniors and increase access to assisted living. We will expand Medicaid to help seniors who have not reached Medicare-age, namely, seniors who have lost their job or work in jobs that do not offer health coverage. We must help insure all seniors. Additionally, we will expand Medicaid to meet the assisted living needs of more seniors.
- Support caregivers and promote brain health research and awareness. With more than 140,000 seniors living with Alzheimer’s and 500,000 Georgians caring for them, brain health must be at the forefront of our efforts as a state going forward. Georgia’s research community has identified brain health and Alzheimer’s research as opportunities for us to lead the nation. We will coordinate state resources with research and service partners to improve the lives of those afflicted by Alzheimer’s, support their caregivers, and broaden awareness.

## **GEORGIANS WITH DISABILITIES**

Georgians with certain physical conditions, intellectual or developmental disabilities, or serious mental illness or behavioral disorders have health needs that go beyond what many families can afford. We need strong, responsive public programs to meet the medical needs of Georgians with disabilities. As governor, Stacey Abrams will:

- Protect Medicaid so more than 330,000 Georgians with disabilities can get the medical care, long-term care, and home and community-based services they need.
- Support Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Centers for Independent Living to ensure full coverage across Georgia.
- Fully leverage federal Medicaid funds so children can get the services they need in our schools.
- Ensure the disability community has a seat at the table in state-level policymaking.

Additionally, Abrams has released policies to improve services and opportunities for Georgians with disabilities in other platforms, including Employment First strategies in Economic Mobility Platform, grants to expand child care options for children with disabilities, and supports within K-12 and higher education.

## RURAL HEALTH CARE

Stacey Abrams knows we have a rural health care crisis in Georgia and knows it will take statewide leadership and deep investment to address the collapse of rural hospitals and access to care. The decline in populations means that a private market solution is highly unlikely, and if we value our rural communities, we must access all available resources to provide support. As governor, she will:

- Expand Medicaid to save rural hospitals and generate thousands of health care jobs in rural Georgia.
- Promote telehealth to link rural Georgians with specialists outside their community.
- Expand efforts to encourage doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals to locate in rural Georgia—including service cancellable loans and special scholarship programs.
- Increase apprenticeships throughout rural Georgia, including in health care occupations, so Georgians can gain skills and serve their communities.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://ghpc.gsu.edu/download/policy-brief-1332-state-innovation-waivers/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/khn-reinsurance-trump-maine-wisconsin-obamacare.html>

<sup>iii</sup> [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2836866](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2836866) and <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-effects-of-medicare-expansion-under-the-aca-updated-findings-from-a-literature-review-march-2018/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2017-annual-report/measure/MHP/state/GA>

<sup>v</sup> <http://georgiavoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017-Behavioral-Health-Workforce-Analysis.pdf>