PARRA MCT

Kentucky hospitals rely heavily on government payments for Medicaid recipients to stay open.

The Republican plan for Kentucky health care is exactly zero. Are you better off?

BY JERRY DEATON

My sister died of cancer back about five years ago, and for her, it was a battle she bravely waged on two fronts.

Her struggles were, first, to just stay alive, and next to be able to afford having cancer in the United States of America. She knew her cancer was not curable, and she needed to stay alive long enough that hopefully something would come along that would save her. But would she be able to hold out and pay for it?

She endured years of treatments that wracked her body and her finances. At the time, thankfully, there were provisions in the Affordable Care Act that required insurance companies to treat pre-existing conditions.

At one of her treatments, she asked what would happen if the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare as many chose to call it, was repealed, because at that time, there was a tremendous push in the U.S. Congress by the Republicans to do just that.

She was told that she would have to pay the approximately $40,000 per month that her treatments cost. Yes, that figure was $40,000 for each monthly treatment!

My sister knew she probably would not beat her cancer, and one thing she was determined to do was leave something to her children when the time came. She did everything in her power to not have to sell her property to get by, and thankfully, she ended up getting on Social Security Disability. This at least helped relieve her mind that she would not have to sell everything she owned just to survive.

But now, our Republican Congress and President have finally achieved their goal and have removed the subsidies that helped keep insurance premiums affordable for families that pay for their own insurance policies.

Another of my sisters, also impacted by cancer, now pays nearly $2,000 a month for her family policy, along with enormous out-of-pocket expenses. Very few people in Kentucky can afford that, but most of the people we have elected to represent us in Washington seem to think they can.

Republicans have offered little that would effectively replace the ACA and give people like my sisters more than one-time payments or other short-term fixes. They seem to want insurance companies to be in control of the process, and that is exactly what is happening.

Our Kentucky Republican Congressional delegation, (minus Representative Massie and Senator Paul, who both cited the impact on the federal deficit as their reason) supported this, and they are all running for their current or higher offices. Thankfully, the alarm that has been raised has them at least talking about what could be done.

Hospitals in Kentucky will be closing because Republicans are slashing Medicaid payments. The political genius behind this is that the cuts will come after the upcoming midterm elections next year.

Kentucky hospitals rely heavily on government payments for Medicaid recipients to stay open. There is no question that rural hospitals will close. And, if payments for private insurance policies get high enough, those people will be forced to drop their insurance and just go to hospitals and say, "Ok, treat me. I can't pay, but I will sue you if you don't."

Then those hospitals will be faced with closing as well. Folks, this is the plan that our current leaders have for us.

You can say all you want about Democrats, but they try to keep healthcare something that the average person can afford. Think about it.

Jerry Deaton of Frankfort is a retired lobbyist for Kentucky cities and a former legislative employee.

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BLACKFORD

photographers for the entire show.

Part of the exhibit also features digital photographs and art from local artists reflecting on the Latino presence at Kentucky tracks and farms. The actual art is now at UK's W.T. Young Library as "Hispanics: The Heartbeat of Kentucky's Equine Industry."

The two exhibits together "are supremely important because they highlight not just the deep contributions of the Latino community, but the power of working together," said artist and organizer Gloria Artehaga. "They powerfully demonstrate that Latino immigrants and American people have worked hand-in-hand, creating and growing together for generations. This incredible collaboration is what truly improves the equine business, makes the Thoroughbred industry world-class, and strengthens the entire Bluegrass community, proving that diverse cultures working in unity are the strongest foundation for our shared success."

The Keeneland Library is free and open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Go to www.keeneland.com/keeneland-library/raices-making-latino-legacies-racing for more information.

FROM PAGE 1C

EDWARDS

and strengthened to see images of a church filled with several hundred people, all being trained in how to protect their friends and neighbors — people who then spread out across their city to help. More than 30,000 students walked out of schools across Charlotte to protest the presence and brutal tactics of ICE. As a result of this pushback by ordinary citizens, ICE pulled out of Charlotte after just a few days.

So far, ICE hasn't come to Lexington, but they could appear at any time. The hardworking men who did such a good job on the sidewalks could be whisked away and ill-treated simply because of the color of their skin. This is wrong; it is both unconstitutional and cruel. I don't consent to this, and we don't have to consent to it as a city or a state.

Right now, there is a proposal moving through the Kentucky State legislature that would force all law enforcement in Kentucky to sign 287(g) agreements with ICE. This bill would take away local control — which means this bill would take away our voices and our freedom. It would make us all complicit in the violence and abuse of other human beings — sometimes of our fellow citizens — that we've seen from ICE.

We, the people, can stop this bill in its tracks. Let's do it. Let's be as strong and brave as the citizens of Charlotte and stand up for our neighbors, for our Constitution, and for the abiding dignity of every human being. It is the right thing to do, and it is in our own interests. For make no mistake: if this administration can ignore our Constitution and deny due process to one group of people, then none of us are safe.

Lexington resident Kim Edwards is author of the international bestseller "The Memory Keeper's Daughter," and other books.

DREAMSTIME TNS

Kentucky needs to stop the slow elimination of the income tax, says Jason Bailey of the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy.

With budget harms becoming clear, it's time to halt income tax elimination

BY JASON BAILEY

President Ronald Reagan pushed massive tax cuts through Congress shortly after taking office in 1981. But when the country's budget started bleeding red ink, Reagan reversed course and raised taxes in 1982 and 10 more times after that.

Similarly, the state of Kansas enacted huge tax cuts starting in 2012. But when those income tax reductions blew a hole in the state budget, the Republican legislature rolled them back just five years later.

In both cases, the theory behind trickle-down economics — that income tax cuts for wealthy people and corporations will spur economic growth and pay for themselves — failed to pan out. Time after time, confident elected officials enamored of this ideology have watched it collide with reality.

In recent years, the Kentucky General Assembly pursued a similar experiment. Its top priority has been to cut and ultimately eliminate the individual income tax, previously the source of nearly half of state General Fund revenue. It moved toward this goal by passing a "trigger formula" that recommends permanent reductions in the tax rate based on a one-year snapshot of revenues, spending and reserve balances.

But now revenues are weakening as a result, and the legislature looks headed for a familiar dilemma. Will state lawmakers barrel ahead with more tax cuts in the upcoming legislative session, even in the face of flashing warning signs? Or will they pause and consider what Kentucky really needs?

After shifting its graduated income tax to a flat tax in 2018, the General Assembly began passing the largest tax cuts in state history in 2022. These income tax reductions, approved at a time when the national economy was booming, were phased in to push the costs off until later. Whereas the top income tax rate was 6% before 2018, it will be just 3.5% as of January 2026.

Since the cuts began, the pandemic stimulus boom has come to an end. The national economy has weakened further, in part due to federal tariffs, deportations and budget cuts. At the same time, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) that passed Congress this summer passes huge new costs on to states for SNAP food assistance and Medicaid. And the harm of the state income tax reductions on revenue are starting to show, with Governor Beshear recently announcing a projected $305 million budget shortfall this year.

As conditions began to deteriorate, the legislature moved the goalposts on its trigger formula to make tax cuts more likely. Lawmakers exempted expenditures that had been passed through the Budget Reserve Trust Fund from counting as spending. In the last budget they put certain spending items in a separate bill that was then arbitrarily shielded from the trigger rules. And in 2025, the legislature changed the formula to recommend smaller tax cuts even if the previous benchmarks were not hit.

But because income tax cuts are so expensive to the state, hitting the trigger is still increasingly difficult. And it was missed this summer despite an enormous bump in corporate tax payments that is not expected to continue. That means the legislature's own formula does not recommend a reduction of the income tax rate from 3.5% to 3% in 2027.

Regardless, some members of legislative leadership recently suggested they might charge ahead with a tax cut anyway. That would go beyond moving the goalposts to simply tearing them down.

All this undermines the claim that decisions to eliminate the state's largest revenue source, the benefits of which go overwhelmingly to the wealthy, are undertaken with prudence or somehow based on evidence. These cuts are just a choice to take resources away from the schools, hospitals and infrastructure that benefit everyone, and send them to the powerful few.

Now is the time to take a fiscally responsible approach that puts all Kentuckians first. It begins with stopping further tax cuts and avoiding the mistakes of those who've pursued this path before.

Jason Bailey is executive director of the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, www.kypolicy.org.