A safety net that works, Kentucky's commitment to Medicaid modernization

JAMES **TIPTON**

For more than sixty years, Medicaid has served as one of the nation's most important safety-net programs. Created in 1965 alongside Medicare, Medicaid was designed to help low-income children, pregnant women, and adults, individuals with disabilities, and those who need long-term care because of age or disability. Unlike Medicare, which is an earned benefit tied to age or disability, Medicaid has always been rooted in need. And, while Medicare is run exclusively by the federal government, Medicaid is funded with federal and state money and administered at the state level.

Kentucky lawmakers have long recognized the value of that mission. We fully funded the program in the budget we approved earlier this year, including more funding than what was requested in the governor's budget and additional money for waiver programs to provide additional services and supports to eligible individuals with specific needs. These waivers often provide better care at lower cost, helping folks receive care in their homes and communities.

However, we also recognize a hard truth: we will not solve today's challenges with yesterday's solutions. Medicaid has grown dramatically since its creation, both in cost and complexity. Medicaid is our second largest budget category (right behind public K-12 education) and a third of Kentuckians receive benefits.

However, it is becoming less of a safety net and more of a barrier. And, when a safety net becomes a barrier, it stops doing the job it was created to do. Modernizing it is not just a policy preference. It is a necessity. This summer, the General Assembly took another meaningful step toward doing exactly that.

Three new subcommittees have been created under the Medicaid Oversight and Advisory Board and two met for the first time in mid-July: the Healthcare Transparency Dashboard Subcommittee and the Waiver Waitlist Management Subcommittee. The third subcommittee will meet in the next few weeks to study non-emergency medical transportation, a Medicaid benefit that provides transportation to and from medical appointments and other covered services.

The creation of these subcommittees reflects the legislature's clear intent to make Medicaid more effective and more efficient - for the people it was created to serve and for the taxpayers who fund it.

The Healthcare Transparency Dashboard Subcommittee is charged with building a secure, data-driven dashboard housed within the Legislative Research Commission. In convening the meeting, the House Chair emphasized the need for better data, which in turn leads to better decisions and better health for those who rely on Medicaid. The subcommittee will track public

health trends, monitor Medicaid performance, highlight gaps in care, and give policymakers a clearer picture of what is working and what is not.

The Waiver Waitlist Management Subcommittee is tackling one of the most persistent challenges in the system: long wait times for Kentucky's 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Services waivers. These waivers help individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, as well as elderly Kentuckians, receive care in their homes and communities rather than in institutions. Demand has grown faster than available slots, leaving families waiting months or even years. During the first meeting, the House Chair stressed the urgency of finding solutions that reduce wait times, maximize resources, and ensure timely access to critical services.

All three subcommittees share a common purpose - strengthening Medicaid so it works better for the people who depend on it. Their work is not about cutting services or shifting responsibility. It is about modernizing a decades-old program so it can meet the needs of a modern state. It is about acknowledging that Kentucky can do better, and then doing the hard work to make that happen.

Legislative leaders have been clear: taking care of our most vulnerable is important, but funding alone is not enough. Oversight, innovation, and accountability matter just as much. These subcommittees represent that commitment in action. As the 2026 Interim continues, lawmakers will keep digging into the details - the data, the waitlists, the performance metrics, the gaps in care - because meaningful reform doesn't happen overnight. It happens through steady, deliberate work.

Medicaid was created to serve the vulnerable. The legislature is taking real steps toward a stronger, more responsive Medicaid program for the decades ahead.

As always, I can be reached on my mobile at (502) 639-7079 or through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181. You can also contact me via email at James.Tipton@kylegislature.gov and keep track through the Kentucky legislature's website at legislature.ky.gov.

Cell phone company defunds the City of Taylorsville

PRESS RELEASE

Spencer County, Kentucky — Shawn D. Glisson, M.D. and Vickie Yates Glisson filed an action in Spencer Circuit Court challenging the Taylorsville–Spencer County Joint Planning and Zoning Commission's ("P&Z Commission") approval of AT&T Mobility's (AT&T) application to construct a 199-foot cell tower on property zoned Ag1 that lies between Wilsonville Road and Highway 1-55.

According to the complaint, AT&T failed to properly meet the P&Z Commission's regulatory requirements in its application.

The lawsuit alleges that the P&Z Commission's regulations require applicants to evaluate potential cell tower locations in a specific order of preference before approving any alternative location. The preferred locations from most preferred to least preferred are as follows;

- Street right-of-way;
- Existing utility towers;
- Industrial zones;
- Commercial zones; and
- Government buildings.

The complaint alleges that if a proposed cell tower cannot reasonably be located on one of the preferred sites, the applicant must request a modification or waiver and provide written justification explaining why each preferred location is unsuitable.

According to the lawsuit, no such request for a modification or waiver was submitted, and no written justification was provided. Instead, the P&Z Commission approved construction of the proposed cell tower on agriculturally zoned property despite the requirements of its own regulations.

TAXPAYERS WILL BE HURT

The lawsuit raises concerns regarding the financial impact of the P&Z Commission's decision on the City of Taylorsville and Spencer County taxpayers. There are multiple sites in the area that meet the preferred-site criteria, but none were considered, including sites that would provide substantial lease revenue to the City of Taylorsville. This revenue would provide much needed financial support to offset the cost to the City of Taylorsville to provide the County's water service. This revenue would also reduce the cost of monthly water bills to Spencer County taxpayers. The failure of

AT&T to properly comply with the P&Z Commission's regulations defunds the City of Taylorsville and denies the taxpayers of Spencer County funding that would offset the cost of their water services.

TRAVELERS WILL BE HURT

In addition, AT&T's failure to locate the cell tower in violation of the P&Z Commission's site location requirements will not provide the optimum cell phone coverage that would be provided if the cell tower was constructed on the most preferred approved site location of a street right of way. AT&T's failure to locate the cell tower along the street right of way denies Spencer County travelers along Highway 1-55 optimum cell phone coverage.

In addition to the alleged violations of the P&Z Commission's preferred site regulations, the lawsuit claims that the applicants failed to provide legally required notices to the Glissons. The P&Z Commission's regulations require, among other things, that every owner of property within five hundred (500) feet of the proposed cell tower to be constructed shall receive notice by certified mail, return receipt requested of the filing of the application and an additional notice of a public hearing. The Glissons allege they own property directly adjoining and contiguous to the property on which the proposed cell tower site will be located and yet they never received any of the certified-mail return receipt requested notices required by the P&Z Commission's regulations.

The lawsuit seeks a temporary injunction preventing construction of the proposed tower until the Court has an opportunity to consider the merits of the case. It also requests that the Spencer Circuit Court reverse and set aside the P&Z Commission's approval of the cell tower application.

"The purpose of this lawsuit is to ensure that AT&T complies with the County's P&Z regulations in order to protect the taxpayers and travelers of Spencer County" the Glissons said.

Dr. Glisson also said "Apparently this is not the only cell phone tower being built in violation of the County's regulations. If cell phone towers keep going up on site locations that are not in compliance with the P&Z Commission's regulations, Spencer County taxpayers should not be surprised when their county taxes increase significantly and services decrease because the City of Taylorsville Water Company lacks the necessary funding to install and repair water pipes and Spencer County travelers should not be surprised when their cell phone calls continue to drop".

The case is currently pending before the Spencer Circuit Court.

Kentucky Soybean Board rolls out classroom resources

SUBMITTED

The Kentucky Soybean Board promotes the adage that soy touches every life, every day, and with the help of our national partners at the United Soybean Board we have added new resources to our website, KySoy.org, to show some of the many ways that students encounter soy in their daily lives, whether at home or in the classroom.

When many people think of soy, they think of tofu and edamame, but these dishes are a tiny fraction of what our renewable, sustainable, and versatile crop can provide. On the education page of KySoy.org, teachers and parents can find resources ranging from our Soy Much Fun with Buddy the Bean Activity Book, which has something for pre-K through

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BACK TO SCHOOL FUN FACTS

GEARING UP FOR SCHOOL

In the United States in 2023, there were approximately:

- 3,700 children and infant clothing stores
- 18,200 shoe stores
- 2,400 department stores
- 4,200 office supply and stationary stores
- 5,600 bookstores

(These are for establishments with employees)

EDUCATION PAYS OFF

In 2023, workers made a different average yearly salaries based on their education level.

- People with a Bachelor's degree made about $87,000
- High school graduates and GED recipients made about $47,000
- Those with an education below 9th grade made about $38,000

(This represents workers' age 18 and older with earnings)

HITTING THE BOOKS

About $16,526 is the current spending per people amount in dollars for elementary and secondary public school systems in the United States in fiscal year 2023.

Average per pupil current spending for each region:

- Northeast - $25,330
- West - $16,630
- Midwest - $16,220

ROLL CALL

- The nation's 5.7 million teachers will return to the classroom this fall to educate an estimated 54.1 million students aged 3 years and older enrolled in K-12.
- Of these teachers, nearly 56% are elementary or middle school teachers, and more than 78% are female. Almost half (48.5%) of 3 to 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool.

Sources: Data on this page come from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2023 County Business Patterns, 2023 Current Population Survey, 2023 Annual Survey of School System Finances, 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates, and U.S. School System Current Spending Per Pupil by Region: FY 2023.

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