

Obamacare: It's Not for the Children

By Matt A. Mayer

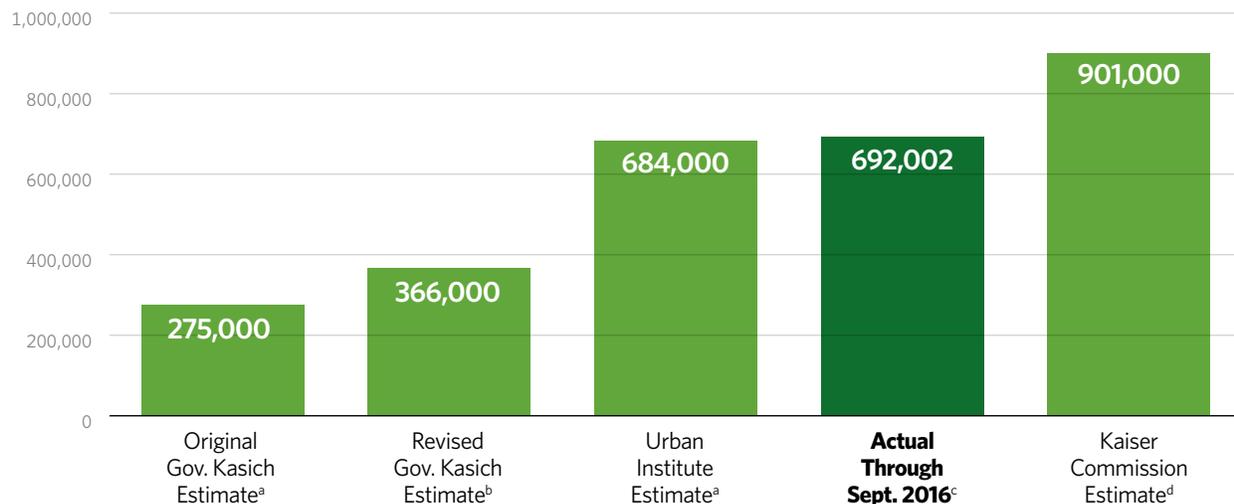
Deploying a classic tool of liberal media bias, a news report recently claimed that “Medicaid expansion aid[ed] Ohio kids.” Specifically, in a [report produced by the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families](#), the October 28, 2016, [Columbus Dispatch](#) noted that “26,000 children gained coverage between 2013 and 2015.” The reporter left key facts out of her story. Namely, Ohio’s rankings for the number of

uninsured kids and the percentage of uninsured kids **got worse** from 2013 to 2015, as Ohio fell from 43rd to 46th and from 15th to 29th, respectively.

Though giving health insurance coverage to 26,000 kids is certainly nothing to sneeze at, the article left out a major fact: how many kids specifically received coverage under expanded Medicaid (versus via original Medicaid —lots of people who are eligible fail to sign up—or the State Children’s Health Insurance Program). Why the omission? As we [noted in June 2013](#), the fact is that pre-

Chart 1

ESTIMATES OF OHIO MEDICAID EXPANSION ENROLLMENT



a — <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/02/06/exclusive-how-ohios-republican-governor-sold-the-state-on-expanding-medicaid/>

b — <http://watchdog.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2014/09/OHT-medicaid-expansion-enrollment-2013-02.jpg>

c — <http://medicaid.ohio.gov/Portals/0/Resources/Research/MedicaidEligExpReports/2016/Med-09.pdf>

d — <http://www.policymattersohio.org/medicaid-sept2012>

expanded Medicaid already covered kids in households with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty rate (FPR) in Ohio. Expanded Medicaid merely pushed eligibility from 100 percent of the FPR to 138 percent of that figure—62 percent **below** the existing Ohio threshold.

In Ohio, expanded Medicaid **helped adults** with incomes between 100 percent and 138 percent of the FPR to gain health insurance. It did nothing for kids given the existing higher threshold for coverage. It did expand health insurance coverage to “children” who were 18- and 19-years-old. In January 2014, Ohio [added 20,503](#) of these young adults to the Medicaid rolls. The December 2015 report has [29,074 young adults](#) listed as “children” covered by expanded Medicaid. Similarly, the SCHIP program had [149,692 kids enrolled in August 2013](#) and [added 12,681 by December 2015](#). Is that where the 26,000 came from? The report fails to differentiate so we don't know.

Even if we give expanded Medicaid total credit for all 26,000 kids who received health insurance coverage from 2013 to 2015, that figure is a mere fraction of the sheer mass of people who received Medicaid coverage under the expansion. Specifically, according to the [latest report from the Ohio Department of Medicaid](#), 692,002 Ohioans are now enrolled in expanded Medicaid, which means the 26,000 kids represent just 3.8 percent of all enrollees. Ohio could have provided coverage to those kids at a fraction of the cost of [the enormous liability incurred](#) for the remaining 666,002 adults who received coverage via expanded Medicaid.

As the chart shows, Ohio's expanded Medicaid enrollment is now more than double Governor John Kasich's original estimate and nearly twice his revised estimate. It also has surpassed the estimate from a liberal think tank and is headed towards the high estimate of the Kaiser Commission. We [warned policymakers not to expand Medicaid](#) due to the enormous uncertainty surrounding how many people would enroll and the cost per enrollee, but Governor Kasich ignored our warnings. His failure will harm Ohio's taxpayers for years.

In other Obamacare news, [premiums are going up on average a whopping 25 percent next year](#) for enrollees in the federal exchange, with the number of private insurers dropping from 16 to just 11 for all of Ohio. Enrollees shouldn't worry, though, as the premium increases “don't take into account the government subsidies available to people.” Subsidies that, along with the costs of expanded Medicaid, increase the annual federal deficit and the national debt.

Contrary to the claims of Obamacare proponents and their media allies, the only thing the kids are getting from Obamacare is a growing national debt that they will have to pay in the future. It is time to repeal Obamacare and [replace it by giving each state the money and power](#) to design innovative health insurance programs tailored to its population. A one-size-fits-all program is never the answer to a complex problem in an economically, geographically, socially, and educationally diverse country like America. Decentralization allows our 50 laboratories of competition to find the best solutions through trial, error, and reform.