

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2022

The Honorable Brian P. Kemp  
Governor  
State of Georgia  
206 Washington Street  
Suite 203, State Capitol  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Kemp:

This month, Georgians learned the devastating news that Wellstar Atlanta Medical Center (AMC) hospital is slated to close permanently on November 1, the latest hospital to shut its doors in our state. This closure, like the ones that preceded AMC's demise, will have monumental consequences for Georgia residents, particularly those we represent, as this hospital not only directly serves the Atlanta metro area but is a critical component of our state's entire health care infrastructure.

This termination of healthcare services follows the closure of Wellstar's South Fulton Medical Center in East Point within the last several months. Since 2019, Georgia has also lost Northridge Medical Center in Commerce, Southwest Georgia Regional Medical Center in Cuthbert, Kindred Hospital Rome, and Southern Crescent Hospital for Specialty Care in Riverdale. All of these latter hospitals closed their doors either during or shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic struck our state. In total, 14 hospitals have closed in our state in the last decade, and a report from the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform estimates that at least 19 more Georgia hospitals are at risk of closure today.

The solution to this growing crisis is simple and straightforward: Georgia must accept the federal dollars available to us to expand Medicaid and provide a needed source of funding for hospitals struggling to deal with a growing number of patients. Our state's failure to expand Medicaid has compounded the financial stress faced by hospitals like AMC, leaving our medical centers with unreimbursed care and patients who can only access ER visits, not preventative medicine.

This current situation, wherein those hospitals dealing with a disproportionate burden of uncompensated care are left to struggle against financial strain, is unsustainable. While Medicaid expansion alone in 2022 may not have staved off disaster, data from Georgia and 38 states demonstrates that our disproportionately large uninsured population would dramatically reduce localized costs if they had access to reimbursed care. Moreover, the cumulative effect of nearly a decade of refusal of billions in funding has crippled our hospitals and the local economies they serve. Without Medicaid expansion, the list of hospital closures could grow even longer, and the 19 at-risk hospitals currently struggling to remain open could be forced to close their doors.

This moment demands not simply temporary measures but foundational solutions. Medicaid expansion would not just help sustain hospitals like AMC but would also help bolster major medical

centers like Grady Memorial Hospital, Atlanta's remaining Level 1 Trauma Center. For regions like South Georgia, expansion will create life-altering opportunities for seniors, the most vulnerable and for real medical care.

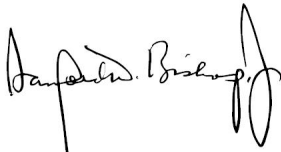
As elected leaders, we can not only act to prevent further closures but support medical facilities that are facing greater and greater burdens due to so many providers being shuttered. Any additional actions must also include working with local governments to alleviate the crisis, particularly given concerns already voiced at the local level that without intervention, counties may be forced to raise taxes to fund remaining medical centers.

Our role as Congress members requires us to advocate for those we serve. That is why we are appealing to you as the leader of our state to take action immediately to save hospitals like AMC that are desperately needed by the communities they serve and work to contain the financial strain engulfing our medical system. Medicaid expansion will give our communities a chance to prevent further hospital closures that put the health and well-being of our citizens at risk and support the health care system across our state.

Governor Kemp, we implore you to stop a worsening crisis and stand up to protect the families, communities, and health of not only Atlanta but all of Georgia.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Carolyn Bourdeaux  
Member of Congress



David Scott  
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress