

# **IMPulse**

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11623 Lake Shore  
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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

**Post Register**

Idaho Falls, Idaho

**Wednesday, March 28, 2018**

**Dr Mary Barinaga**

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## **Guest column: A voter supported solution for health care in our state**

Help our state address the Medicaid gap by collecting signatures for a voter-supported solution, writes Dr. Mary Barinaga.

Delivering bad news is part of my job. It never gets easier, and unfortunately, I've gotten a lot of practice during my 23 years as a family physician working in Idaho's underserved settings. One of the hardest experiences of my life was telling "Mrs. S" that she had cancer that had already spread throughout her body. Mrs. S lived in rural Idaho and her job as a daycare provider didn't provide medical coverage. Despite experiencing months of unexplained bleeding and weight loss, she delayed seeking care because she simply couldn't afford it. Mrs. S died about 6 months later, leaving her three children motherless and her husband bankrupt with medical bills. Lack of access to medical care destroyed this family. Lack of action by the Idaho Legislature to address the health coverage gap will repeat this tragic situation for more working Idaho families in the health coverage gap.

Tragic cases of Idahoans suffering and sometimes dying due to a lack of access to affordable care are even more prevalent in our rural communities, where incomes are lower and many jobs don't provide insurance. Rural areas are often underfunded and understaffed when it comes to healthcare workers, and cost is a major barrier that keeps Idahoans from getting the care they need.

Disappointingly, the Idaho Legislature failed again in 2018 to narrow Idaho's coverage gap with the Idaho Health Care Plan-Governor Otter's proposal that would have made health coverage affordable for 35,000 Idahoans and reduced health care costs for Idahoans on the state exchange. While many courageous legislators stood up for their constituents and called for a vote on the plan, the Idaho House of Representatives refused to vote, sending the bill back to committee not once, but twice.

Idaho needs a proactive solution to address the health coverage gap now. Since the Idaho Legislature has failed to lead, it's time to take this issue to the voters. Signature collection is underway to close the gap at the ballot in November. Signatures need to be collected by April 30 and must include 6 percent of registered voters in 18 of Idaho 35 legislative districts.

An overwhelming majority of Idahoans support closing the gap and it's time for all of us to get behind this ballot effort. Our friends and neighbors in the gap, especially those in rural Idaho, need us.

Help collect signatures now and then let's work together to make sure the people of Idaho decide to vote to close the coverage gap during the November election. You can learn more about how to engage in signature

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collection at [medicaidforidaho.org](http://medicaidforidaho.org). My patients can't wait any longer to receive the affordable health coverage they need to live healthy, productive lives.

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