By Representatives Rafferty, Chestnut, Forte, Clarke, Daniels, Howard, Jones (S), Jackson, Boyd, Morris, Moore (M), Hollis, McCampbell, Drummond, Hatcher, Gray, Coleman, Hall and Givan

RFD: Rules

First Read: 12-MAR-20
EXPRESSING THE INTENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF
THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE AND URGING THE GOVERNOR TO IMMEDIATELY
EXPAND MEDICAID UNDER THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT IN THE STATE OF
ALABAMA IN RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE
CURRENT RURAL HEALTH CARE CRISIS.

WHEREAS, the Alabama Legislature has questioned how
to provide comprehensive, quality health care to all
Alabamians regardless of income, health status, age, or gender
time and time again; and

WHEREAS, Alabamians are suffering because of their
lack of access to health care; and

WHEREAS, in December of 2019, the world was stunned
by an outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease in Wuhan, China; and

WHEREAS, shortly thereafter on February 4, 2020, the
United States government declared the novel coronavirus a
public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, the United States has 1,109 confirmed cases
and 31 deaths reported from the virus as of March 11, 2020;
WHEREAS, in the wake of the current classification of COVID-19 as a pandemic by the World Health Organization, a COVID-19 outbreak in the state of Alabama could be devastating to the state’s economy and the health of our citizens; and

WHEREAS, by not expanding Medicaid, this ensures that many Alabamians that may become infected will go undiagnosed and untreated; people for whom going to the doctor would result in financial calamity tend not to do so before their health circumstances become dire; and

WHEREAS, Alabama's hospitals have experienced millions of dollars of cuts in federal assistance due to the Governor's refusal to expand Medicaid; this has placed a tremendous financial strain on hospitals and resulted in elimination of services, loss of jobs, and even hospital closures, thereby reducing access to care for every Alabamian; and

WHEREAS, reducing the number of uninsured patients will keep hospitals open; since 2011, 17 Alabama hospitals have closed, while 88 percent of those remaining rural hospitals are operating in the red, and 75 percent of all Alabama hospitals are operating in the red; these hospitals depend on federal dollars to offset the cost of serving a high proportion of low-income and uninsured patients, however they have suffered due to the state's failure to expand Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, approximately 397,000 uninsured Alabamians would be eligible to receive low-cost health insurance, with a
majority of these residents employed; covering low-income adults would also reduce the burden of medical debt, now the leading cause of personal bankruptcy; and

WHEREAS, according to the Kaiser Foundation, Alabama has the second highest prevalence of heart disease-related deaths in the nation at 224.7 deaths per 100,000 people; and

WHEREAS, according to the Kaiser Foundation, Alabama has the fifth highest infant mortality rate in the nation at 7.38 deaths per 1,000 live births; and

WHEREAS, broader access to health care leads to preventive care, which produces healthier families, a healthier workforce, and an all-around healthier state; with the expansion of Medicaid, hundreds of thousands of Alabamians will have access to preventive care for the first time in their lives, rather than access to acute care only; and

WHEREAS, expansion of Medicaid will result in reduced state spending on health care-related services to those previously uninsured residents with incomes below 133 percent of the federal poverty limit; and

WHEREAS, studies indicate that a one dollar ($1) increase in federal spending on Medicaid yields an additional 65 to 75 cents of economic activity; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid expansion would create 30,000 new jobs, $11.37 billion in increased economic activity in the next three years, and roughly $3 billion annually thereafter; and
WHEREAS, with the additional revenue and economic activity that would be generated from expanding Medicaid, the cost to the State of Alabama would be more than covered; and

WHEREAS, thousands of underinsured Alabama veterans would gain health coverage if Alabama closed the health coverage gap; many veterans do not qualify for long-term health benefits; an estimated 13,000 uninsured Alabama veterans and their spouses would gain access to medical insurance coverage by expanding Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, closing the coverage gap is a wise investment in Alabama's future; thousands of hardworking people who cannot afford insurance will gain the peace of mind that coverage brings; Alabama businesses stand to gain a more reliable workforce and Alabama's economy stands to gain an infusion of federal dollars, more tax revenues, and thousands of new health care jobs; and

WHEREAS, according to the Alabama Health Care Improvement Task Force, Medicaid expansion for less than a dime on the dollar is a bargain that Alabama cannot afford to pass up; and

WHEREAS, the Alabama Health Care Improvement Task Force recommended that the Governor and the Legislature move forward at the earliest opportunity to close Alabama's health coverage gap by expanding Medicaid; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That the members of the Democratic Party urge the Governor of the State of Alabama to expand
Medicaid in this state under the Patient Protection and
Affordable Care Act to enhance access to health care, promote
revenue and economic activity, preserve and create jobs in
this state, and protect the wellbeing of the citizens of
Alabama.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this
resolution be sent to Governor Kay Ivey that she may know of
the strong sentiments of the Democratic members of the
Legislature concerning this issue.