

Testimony of Danielle Ryals
111 West Street, Albion, ID 83311
To present to the Healthcare Alternatives Workgroup

Thank you Chairmen Hagedorn and Loertscher and members of this Workgroup for allowing testimony on the health care coverage gap. My name is Dannielle Ryals. I appreciate you allowing my testimony to be read for me, as I am working two jobs and unable to travel to Boise from Albion for this meeting.

My husband and I fall into the coverage gap, and we are concerned about our lack of access to affordable health insurance. We were so hopeful that the legislature would take action to close the gap earlier this year and now we are counting on you to come up with a complete solution that will help provide affordable access to full healthcare coverage.

My husband works as a tile layer here in Albion. I take care of my three young children, and work two additional jobs—helping at my husband’s worksite by bringing them tools and grouting the tile and doing the clean up on site. I also work at a local gas station in the evenings. I used to work as a Certified Nursing Assistant but had to quit that job when a respiratory infection went untreated. My husband has high-blood pressure but we can’t afford the medication for it. Last year, I fell down the stairs and broke a rib. At that time, a check-up revealed I had issues with my heart. If we saw a cardiologist, we would need to pay for a visit in full and we can’t afford to visit a specialist and still make rent and get food on the table.

Earlier this year, my husband broke his finger, and we couldn’t afford any medical care. This past February, I had to have surgery for chronic adhesions due to the endometriosis I have had since I was a child. I developed an infection and had to be hospitalized. My boss, at a new job I had recently secured, called to let me know that he couldn't wait for me to better and told me I had lost my job. I had to sell one of my prized possessions, my snow globe collection, in order to afford antibiotics to treat my infection. Just a few weeks ago, I came down with a kidney infection, which triggered a terrible bout of shingles. Medication cost us \$245 so we couldn’t pay our power bill and are dealing with the stress of making ends meet for rent, food, etc. I am not yet recovered, but cannot afford to lose these jobs, so I am working through the pain.

My family is not looking for a government hand-out. Closing the coverage gap would be one of the most important things you could do to make my family, and other families like mine, healthier and more productive. Being in the gap makes it harder to work. By helping us access affordable healthcare coverage, we will be more productive and able to support our family without government assistance. Our faith is very important to us. We are good Christian people and we will accept God's will in our lives. If it be His will that a solution is found for closing the gap then we will count it as another blessing. I pray that you will close the gap soon. Thank you.