

Introduction: Good morning everyone. Welcome to the University Medical Center, home of the Reverend Avery C. Alexander Academic Research Hospital, and really home of a wonderful place. For those of you who haven't been here, this has really been ground zero of economic development in the past several years since Hurricane Katrina and really a vital part of this city and an extremely important public investment and state asset. Our faculty, physicians and staff that are part of this facility and were part of the interim LSU hospital before that and Charity Hospital before that have always provided outstanding care and they now have a facility that's commensurate with their skill. So we appreciate you being here today to be part of this great event. Let me take a second and recognize some of our extremely dedicated state and public officials we have State Representative Gary Carter here, Council Member James Gray, Council Member Latoya Cantrell and Council Member Nadine Ramsey. Thank you for being here and charity let me apologize I didn't recognize council member Jared Brossett and he has done so much not only for you UMC and Children's Hospital in this community, so Council Member Jared Brossett, thank you. UMC fills a gap that no other hospital in the area can, and since opening we've seen the number of patients increase here, we've seen our access increase, patient satisfaction scores and quality scores all on the uptick and we are excited. We're also the training ground for the next generation of physicians. We train over nine hundred residents a year and they get life-changing experiences here. Our team here at UMC is really there on the front line of Medicaid Expansion and they see firsthand the struggles of the uninsured. Medicaid Expansion will help the financial health of the state and the physical health of this community. It's why we are so excited to have the Governor and the Secretary here today talk about Medicaid Expansion. It was an historic moment when the Governor signed Medicaid Expansion in his first full day in office. It will dramatically change the lives of many in our community. The truth is we all know people who will benefit from Medicaid Expansion. They're the backbone of our economy and they deserve to have health care coverage. In July, they will have health care coverage. It's simply the right thing to do for our state, our city and our economy. Governor, we are proud to have you here today, for you're part of our team, you're part of being a provider, you're part of our faculty of residence and the patients that we serve and what you did in signing the Medicaid Expansion in law will change lives. It's my privilege now to introduce Governor John Bel Edwards.

Governor: Thank you Greg and thank all of you for being here and I'm going to make some comments to talk about Medicaid expansion, but sometimes we get lost in numbers. Are we going to save money? Is it going to cost us money? How many people are going to be enrolled? What does it really mean? So before we lose focus, I just want a few people to come up here so you can Hard working Louisiana residents are going to have the benefit of health care coverage with dollars that we have been sending to Washington. The state is going to save money and they are going to have health care Let's talk about that decision. What's hard about that decision? What is hard about that decision? God bless you, thank you very much. Greg, thank you again for the introduction. I want to thank Dr. W for a tour of this wonderful and magnificent facility that truly is worthy of the people of this part of our state and really from all over the state who are going to access services here, but also those people who are going to work here and train here. I want to thank Dr. Gee for being with us today. She has done a remarkable job early in her tenure at the Department of Health and Hospitals. I know Ms. Ruth Kennedy is here. She's the point person in charge of Medicaid Expansion. A national expert that we've had right here in Louisiana that we've been able to rely upon for the expansion and while it isn't done yet I know

that we are where we are today largely as a result of your efforts. I want to thank you Ruth for what you've done. I too want to thank Representative Carter for being here and so many folks from the New Orleans Council, Councilman Gray and Ramsey and Brossett and Cantrelle, thank y'all so very much for being here. I said it before, but I just want to reiterate this-- First full day in office I signed an Executive Order not because it was a rash decision, I didn't wake up that morning deciding to do it. For three years I filed legislation trying to force the Medicaid Expansion because I believed it was the right thing to do for our state, for the people who needed coverage, for the employers who would benefit from our hospitals, doctors and other providers. It just seemed like the right thing to do, especially since by opting out of the Medicaid Expansion we didn't opt out of the taxes that we were paying. Instead, our taxes were going to Washington and being sent to 30 other states, so that they're working poor had the benefit of health care coverage, so that their providers got reimbursement, so that their employers had a better work force while ours went without. So I said it before, and I'll say it again today, the easiest big decision that I will make as Governor, I made on January the 12th when I signed the Executive Order for Medicaid Expansion. And for me this isn't a Liberal versus Conservative Republican versus Democrat, this is right versus wrong not right versus left, and there is not a more conservative notion though then making sure you get the benefit of the tax dollars you're paying. And so we're going to start doing that effective on July 1st. Today is the first day of enrollment and because of the expert folks that we have guiding us through this process, I can tell you that that we have a hundred and seventy five thousand people enrolled already. Think about that, and because of the assistance that we're getting from folks right here, for example at this hospital we're going to have between five and nine people whose jobs it will be to interface with folks so that they can access Medicaid coverage throughout station people they're going to be here a sponsored by this hospital and we have more than a hundred providers around the state that are going to do that. You can access information about the Medicaid Expansion through healthy.la.gov and I encourage you to do that. We believe that the file enrollment figures are going to be somewhere between 300 and 375 thousand people, and then the process of enrolling these people, faces of like you saw today, the state of Louisiana in the first year alone will save 184 million dollars. Now, having inherited the largest budget deficit in our history of two billion and having worked very hard and we're not there yet, we have a lot of work left to do, we've whittled our deficit for next year down to 600 million. That hundred and eighty four million in savings is critical for us to be successful and we have a second special session where we are going to be more successful as well so that we can make sure that we can stand by not just our Medicaid patients, but by their providers. Greg, we've got a lot of work to do but we're going to get it done. So I just want to tell you that I'm excited about this and while I'm so excited about the news, the Medicaid Expansion, the savings, the number of people, all of those sorts of things, at the end of the day the task that I've given Dr. Gee is we're going to improve health outcomes in Louisiana. We want a better quality of life for our people. We want them to be happier, healthier, more productive people and access to coverage where we can diagnose earlier, treat earlier, manage diseases better and stop dispensing so much care through emergency rooms, where it is the most expensive setting to deliver care in the least effective way to manage health. So I'm excited about what we're doing. You know it's been a very difficult challenge as Governor over the first few months and challenges remain, but we're doing some great things too. And I am so happy to be with you all here in New Orleans and while we think we have about three hundred seventy five thousand people to enroll in Medicaid, one third of that population comes from right here in this region and that's why it's important that everybody in this room and

everybody out there watching get the information that we're putting out there about Medicaid expansion, who's eligible, how they enroll, when coverage begins, and so I would just direct you again to healthy.la.gov to provide you more information, and if you don't see the information you're looking for there is a phone number, you call that phone number you will talk to a live human being and they will guide you through this process. And this is an ongoing process, even though enrollment starts today coverage starts July 1st. Overtime because people come of age, because people get employed or they lose employment, they will filter in and out of eligibility and so it's important that we stay on this of throughout not just that the next several months, but all the way through. And so this is a permanent feature, having these out station employees with providers to make sure that people enrolling in Medicaid Expansion. So again thank you very much for being here. I want to tell you what a blessing it is for me to be able to spend some time with you all and to look into the faces of people who work so excited and relieved about the health care coverage that they will have for the first time on July 1st. that's what this is about, and so I will be followed by Dr. Gee if we can be of any assistance to you all please don't hesitate to call on us. If you need something from me or my administration or DHH, whether its Medicaid Expansion or whatever, call on us, but before I give up the podium I'm going to call on you to pray for our great state. I happen to believe in the awesome power of prayer and and I'm not just asking for prayers for myself, although those are welcome, I'm asking for prayers for our state, for all of our leaders, so that we can come together and make decisions that will best serve the people of Louisiana.

Dr. Gee: Thank you all very much. Thanks Governor, it's so exciting to be my home town today and to be standing here in the Reverend Avery Alexander University Hospital in New Orleans to celebrate a landmark to step in our state's history. It's really as this building bears the name of Reverend Avery Alexander as the Old Charity Hospital did, Reverend Alexander committed his life to advancing justice in the city, he promoted his contemporary and compatriot Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King, he proclaimed the moral imperative of opportunity and equality that we must off that we must honor the humidity of all members of our society in equal measure. Among those dignities Reverend Alexander and Dr. King recognized healthcare as a crucial component of the construct of liberty. As Dr. King said, of all the forms of inequality injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane. While inequalities and injustices in our communities have continued to diminish over the decades they persist under the surface, lurking only to be revealed in some of our most desperate hours. We saw many of these inequalities surface during the dark days of Katrina when the levee failures that inundated the ground we stand on today. The help and resources this community needed to weather the storm and flood frankly didn't live up to the task, yet our community is resilient, both across the state and here in the city of New Orleans and we would not let these tragedies sustain. Since the flood, through partnerships, collaboration and innovation, this community has bound together and provided for those who are the most vulnerable. As we've rebuilt the physical architecture of this city, including this absolutely gorgeous building, we've also remade the health care spaces. Since the storm this region has not just put together the broken pieces back together, but transformed and innovated in ways that celebrate ingenuity and broaden health equity. Whether it's the New Key Program, our providers and clinics that sprouted up to care for the primary care needs of the community, the Musicians Clinic, the Tulane Clinics, the LSU Clinics, or the beautiful new health care facilities, this facility, the beautiful new hospital in New Orleans East, the community health clinics that have grown up to meet the challenge of healthcare access. These have made

enormous impact and have transformed the face of this city to be one of the most beautiful and innovative in terms of health care in the world. And finally I wanted to recognize the regional leaders many of whom are here the advocacy community, the provider community, the leaders in the academic and civic spaces, who for so long have fought for what the Governor has said and acknowledged to be the most easy difficult decision you'll ever make, a no-brainer from an ethical standpoint. And today is the day we've been waiting for, we've already had an enrollee sign up both through snap, you might have heard yesterday that we're the first state in the nation to use food stamps to the food stamps enrollment program to be able to enroll people into Medicaid, which is fantastic. Coverage means the chance, as the governor mentioned, of health not just health care for the state of Louisiana. Medicaid Expansion in the spirit of Reverend Alexander struggle opens doors ensures access and promotes equality. Now with access for more than a hundred thousand people in the Greater New Orleans area I challenge our providers to open their doors, put out their welcome mats, fill your facilities with hope and health. I'm proud to be here today and to on on this very very exciting day, coverage starts in July, but the hope starts today in terms of finally having access to care. Not just partial care, but comprehensive care, medications hospital stay, your primary care visits, all of that is now of comprehensive health. So health is now your responsibility, you can no longer use the excuse of no healthcare access. Now you have to eat better, exercise and and take better care of yourself, so that we can be a healthier state which is ultimately our goal.

Representative Carter: Welcome to New Orleans, Governor. It's good to be home, I'm looking forward to another special session though. I will just briefly like to reiterate some of the numbers that we talked about today. We're talking about three hundred seventy five thousand people who now have better access to health care. We're talking about tens of thousands of new jobs, approximately fifteen thousand new jobs in the state of Louisiana. We're talking about savings of significant money over a period of time in a hundred eighty four million dollars in this current fiscal year, I believe. This is a great day for the state of Louisiana, it is a great day for the city of New Orleans, and Governor, I just want to say thank you.

Governor: Now this is a press conference, and so I wanted to make myself and Dr. Gee available for questions and if you ask really hard questions, Greg is going to come up and answer them, but do the members of the press have any questions?

Reporter: So the phone systems, computers, everything is running smoothly today as far as you know?

Well as far as we know that that is correct. We have out stationed workers at about a hundred providers across the state of Louisiana enrolling people, the website is directing them to where they need to be too, we've got phone numbers operating. The great thing that we did is we invested a lot of time early on because through different programs in state government in different agencies we know many of the people who are eligible for Medicaid Expansion, we know who they are, we know where they are, and we know that they are eligible and so we have already taken steps today to enroll a hundred and seventy five thousand people on the way to 375,000 there about. So you know it's it's only a few hours old, I'm certainly not going to say mission accomplished because that doesn't go well sometimes, but but we are certain to have hiccups, but we are going to be successful. We've assembled a great, competent, dedicated team

of public servants who are going to guide us through this process and today has been smooth. Any other questions? Well thank you all again for being here, it is great day for the state of Louisiana a great day for the city of New Orleans, is there a question over here?

Reporter: Inaudible

Well you know the question for those of you didn't hear it is how vulnerable is the expansion of health care coverage through the Medicaid program to the political winds that the change directions in Washington? Clearly at any time a new Congress, a new president, can go in a different direction and change the laws as it relates to the Affordable Care Act and particularly with respect to the Medicaid expansion component of the Affordable Care Act, but I believe that we have to make decisions in light of the reality of the world that we live in today. We know that this expansion is available to us, we know that that we've been paying for it, we now are availing ourselves of the benefits of it. I happen to believe I think we are the 31st state has the right to not to be a district that the DC, DC plus us - 31 States 32 if you can include DC at some point the momentum behind health care coverage catches the wind all its own and will be it will be very difficult for that political wind to change direction especially once we start showing people that we are producing healthier citizenry, more productive citizenry. So I don't worry about what Washington does, but whatever if they do something to change the program then we will take the most responsible step at that time. The most responsible step today is the step that were taking. Thank you all very much.