

# Fast Facts

## Volunteer Care: More Healthcare without More Government

According to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, almost 1 million South Carolinians are enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP. That's nearly 1 in 4 citizens and some want to make it even larger. This model is not sustainable. Thankfully, a new option for individuals who cannot afford health insurance could be coming to the Palmetto State. A program called Volunteer Care, a form of the "Good Samaritan" law, has been on the books in Florida since 1992. *Volunteer Care is a simple concept: the state offers legal protection to doctors in exchange for their providing free and voluntary medical care.*

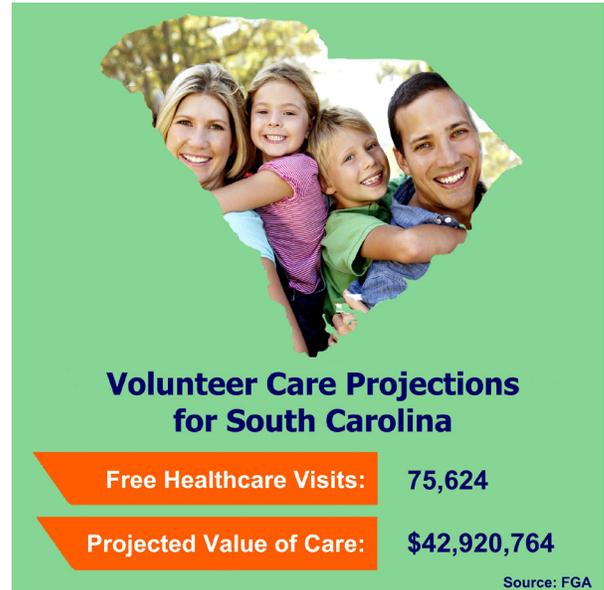
### How Does Volunteer Care Operate?

Based on the Florida experience, The Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA) estimates that a Volunteer Care law in South Carolina would result in 75,624 free healthcare visits valued at \$42,920,764 per year. Three crucial facets of the successful Volunteer Care program in Florida provide a roadmap that South Carolina can follow:

- **Free for Patients.** Volunteer Care allows medical practitioners to choose to see and perform medical procedures on patients who are enrolled in Medicaid, or uninsured patients who fall below 200% of the poverty line at no cost to the patient.
- **Protects Physicians.** Incentives for medical practitioners to participate include: medical practitioners contract with the state and therefore all malpractice liability falls to the state instead of the provider, and medical practitioners can count their volunteer time as credit toward Continuing Medical Education (CME) requirements.
- **Little Cost to State.** By relying on private charities and clinics to implement the program, the cost to the state is minimal, making Volunteer Care a cost-effective program.

### Volunteer Care is Proving to be a Success

South Carolina can look to the success of Florida's Volunteer Care law for the impact such a program could have here. Nearly 25,000 providers have taken part in the Volunteer Care program there. Since 2010, nearly 2.2 million patient visits have occurred through Volunteer Care and in 2014, medical professionals offered free medical care worth over \$275 million. Finally, only 10 patients have filed malpractice suits against Florida since the beginning of the program in 1992 – in other words, every free visit donated by a provider costs the state of Florida 10 cents.



### Why is Volunteer Care Needed?

A recent publication from the Foundation for Excellence in Education entitled *Hurricane Gray* shows in chart form what we all know: South Carolina is becoming a state where fewer and fewer young workers are available to support more and more seniors. This, added to our bloated Medicaid rolls, means we must be more creative in solving our healthcare crisis.

South Carolina is ripe for Volunteer Care. We already have the medical infrastructure to sustain a program, but the threat of malpractice suits presents a barrier to the willingness of medical practitioners to volunteer their services. In addition, South Carolina already has Good Samaritan laws on the books that could be expanded to include physicians in a Volunteer Care framework. Time is running out on the current legislative session, but Volunteer Care has a chance if legislators act now.



Taylor's Free Medical Clinic, near Greenville, was founded by members of Taylor's First Baptist Church in 2004 and opened in 2005. To date, the clinic has screened and serviced over 3,700 patients.