

# Medicaid Buy-in: Crossing Health Care's Political Divide



To: Interested Parties  
 From: Tom Kise, Senior Director of Public Affairs  
 Re: Polling on Medicaid Buy-in - New Mexico and National  
 Date: January 29, 2018

## Key Takeaways

- ★ Medicaid Buy-in is supported by the majority of voters regardless of party.
- ★ The cost of health care continues to be a driving concern for voters
- ★ Voters value predictability and security when comes to healthcare; policies that address these values, like Medicaid Buy-in, will gain traction with voters.
- ★ Because Medicaid Buy-in is a relatively new concept, it is not currently a hyper-partisan issue.

In late 2018, United States of Care commissioned public opinion research in New Mexico and nationally focusing on the idea of Medicaid Buy-in. This memo aggregates and analyzes our learnings from three separate pieces of research, and places them in context within the larger ongoing policy debate.

## KEY NATIONAL LEARNINGS

- ★ **Health care should be affordable.** 88 percent of voters think that they and their neighbors should have an affordable, regular source of health care for themselves and their family. Support by party - 95 percent of Democrats and 82 percent of Republicans.
- ★ **Medicaid Buy-in is an important next step.** 78 percent of voters think Medicaid Buy-in is a potential important next step. Support by party - 89 percent of Democrats and 76 percent of Republicans.
- ★ **Voters think state government is best suited to take on Medicaid Buy-in.** 56 percent of voters think that their state government is best suited to take this next step and address the issue. Support by party - 55 percent of Democrats and 58 percent of Republicans.

To date, the idea of Medicaid Buy-in, or the idea that individuals can have the option to pay into a system that is building on their state's current Medicaid infrastructure, has received a broad level of support regardless of party.

Nationally, we found that 78 percent of Americans supported the idea and said it should be a priority for their state governments. This was reinforced by a recent Kaiser Family Foundation [poll](#) that similarly found that 75 percent of Americans view a Medicaid Buy-in favorably.

Polling in New Mexico, the state leading the charge for buy-in legislation, found very similar results. The concept of buying into the states Medicaid program was supported by 74 percent of New Mexicans once they knew about the idea.

When we look at our findings around Medicaid Buy-in and place the issue in context with other publicly released polling on health care writ large, we have found that Democrat and Republican voters share one core concern and want their elected officials to solve for it - cost.

Earlier this month, Colorado's House Health and Insurance Committee passed their version of a Buy-in bill out of committee with a bipartisan vote. This demonstrates another positive trend that has continued to hold true - the idea of Medicaid Buy-in has largely remained off of the "list" of litmus test issues that too often sidetrack the legislative process.

This fact should be encouraging to lawmakers and constituents alike as this option is explored in statehouses across the country.

## Big Picture: The complexity and cost of accessing health care feel like a threat to individual security



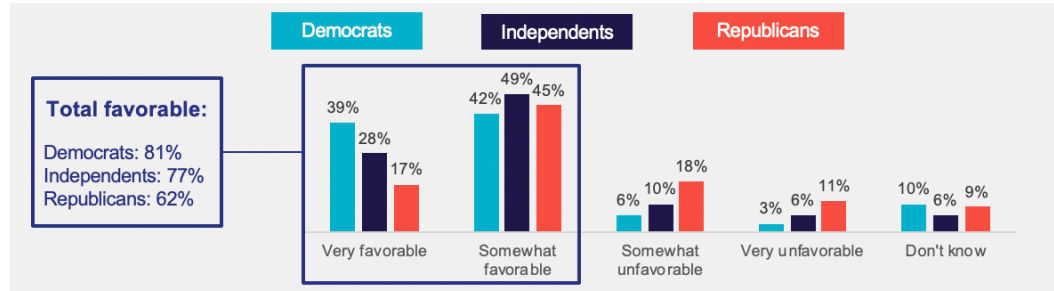
(United States of Care, six focus groups among registered voters in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, October 17-18, 2018.)

**KEY NEW MEXICO LEARNINGS**

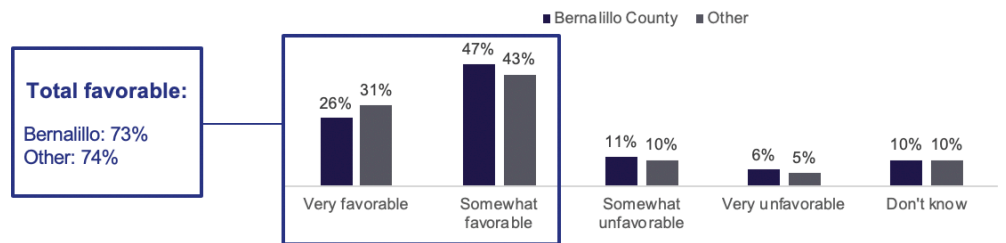
★ **Buy-in is widely supported.** 74 percent are somewhat or very favorable toward the proposal. However, there are significant partisan differences. Democrats' favorability is more intense, with 39 percent very favorable toward the policy. 62 percent of Republicans support the policy as well, but the support is somewhat softer with only 17 percent very favorable toward the policy. Independents are more closely aligned to Democrats than they are to Republicans.

★ **Medicaid is viewed positively.** Two-thirds of voters in New Mexico have a positive view of the state's Medicaid program. Much of that is likely due to the fact that some 40 percent of New Mexico residents use Centennial Care/Medicaid and that familiarity is reinforcing their support and openness to the idea of a buy-in--bolstering the chances for it to succeed.

**In New Mexico, the buy-in policy is viewed positively, but partisan differences exist**



**Those outside Albuquerque are slightly more favorable toward the buy-in policy**



(United States of Care, 1,009 New Mexico voters by Lucid, November 16-29, 2018.)

**After hearing arguments, respondents remain willing to recommend and purchase buy-in plan**

**70%**

Would be willing to recommend the plan for friends and family

**66%**

Would be willing to purchase the plan for themselves

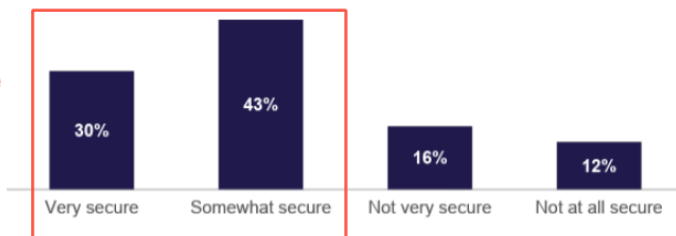
★ **The majority of New Mexicans are open to the idea of either buying a plan themselves or recommending it to a friend.** 70 percent would recommend it to a friend and 66 percent would be willing to purchase the plan themselves.

★ **Cost drives health care concerns.** While the economy and jobs are top issues of concern for New Mexican voters, costs are a top concern among voters when asked specifically about health care. Additionally, New Mexicans are concerned about the numbers of uninsured and access to doctors and providers in the state.

**Buy-in also reinforces feelings of security – a critical element of health care**

How secure do you think this plan would make you feel about your own ability to access health care?

**73% secure**



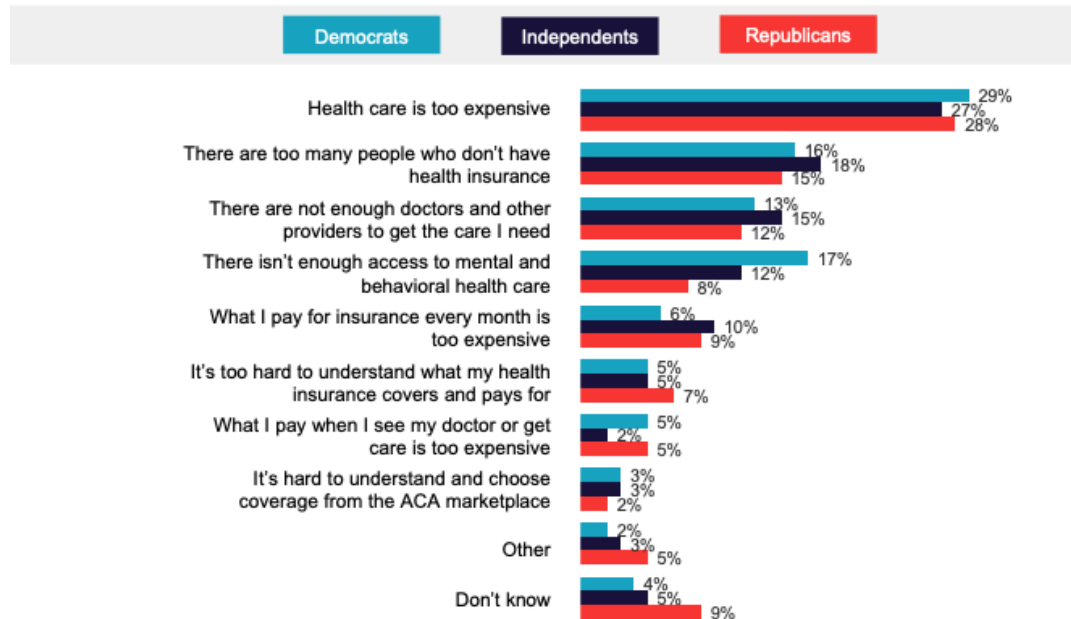
n = 1,009

(United States of Care, 1,009 New Mexico voters by Lucid, November 16-29, 2018.)

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR STATE POLICYMAKERS?

- ★ People want solutions to address both their cost and the cost to the government.
- ★ Voters support the idea that anyone should be able to Buy-in to an affordable system like Medicaid.
- ★ Voters want to see more predictability and stability in how they receive their care.
- ★ Medicaid Buy-in is not a politicized concept. Today, few are very familiar with Medicaid Buy-in, and thus there has not been polarization of the policy like we see in other health care debates.
- ★ Medicaid Buy-in will not be a partisan issue unless politicians make it one.

## Expenses, lack of insurance, and access are top health care concerns



(United States of Care, 1,009 New Mexico Voters by Lucid, November 16-29, 2018.)

## METHODOLOGY

1 The National Survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of US of Care from November 19 - 21, 2018 among 1738 registered voters. *This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.*

2 The New Mexico Survey was conducted online among New Mexico voters by Lucid from November 16-29, 2018 among 1106 New Mexico voters. *This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.*

3 United States of Care, six focus groups among registered voters in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, October 17-18, 2018.

For complete survey methodology, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact Tom Kise (tkise@usofcare.org).