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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****SAFETY NET HOSPITALS APPLAUD GOVERNOR RICK SCOTT  
FOR SUPPORTING MEDICAID EXPANSION**

**TALLAHASSEE, FL, March 5, 2013** – Florida’s safety net hospitals today applauded Governor Rick Scott for supporting a Medicaid expansion that will allow roughly 900,000 uninsured Floridians to obtain health coverage and help eliminate the “hidden healthcare tax” on small businesses and families.

Scott’s decision to support a limited Medicaid expansion, which the governor discussed today in his State of the State speech, represents a common sense approach to the difficult set of choices that Florida faces, said Tony Carvalho, President of the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida.

“Governor Scott and the Legislature face very difficult public policy choices on how to proceed with implementation of the federal Affordable Care Act,” Carvalho said. “We believe that Governor Scott reached a logical conclusion that extends vital health coverage to nearly a million Floridians and assures our citizens get a return on some of the federal tax dollars that they are sending to Washington.”

Governor Scott announced two weeks ago that he supports expanding Medicaid eligibility for uninsured families and children during the three years that the federal government will pay 100 percent of the costs of expansion. Under the Governor’s proposal, the Medicaid expansion would sunset after three years, allowing the executive branch and Legislature to evaluate the program and decide whether to continue or modify it.

Some 3.85 million Floridians are uninsured, leaving the state with the third-highest uninsured rate in the country. Seventy-five percent of uninsured residents have jobs. Extending Medicaid coverage will not only help improve these families’ health and well-being, but it will also provide them with economic support as Florida continues its recovery.

Florida’s hospitals have been hit with \$1 billion in Medicaid reimbursement cuts over the past eight years. Given hospitals are facing another \$654 million in federal Medicare and Medicaid Disproportionate Share (DSH) cuts to help pay for the Affordable Care Act, opting in to Medicaid expansion can be viewed as a way for Florida to get back some of the federal healthcare dollars it is losing, Carvalho said.

Additionally, Carvalho said is important to remember that businesses and families are currently paying a “hidden healthcare tax” on private health insurance premiums – estimated at \$1,017 per family and \$368 per individual – to cover the costs of providing healthcare to the state’s poor and uninsured.

“Governor Scott’s support of a limited Medicaid expansion not only helps more working poor Florida families obtain health coverage, but it also helps to eliminate the hidden healthcare tax on small businesses and families,” Carvalho said. “We will continue working closely with Senate and House leaders to explain this, and are hopeful that they too will reach the same conclusion that Governor Scott has reached.”