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Computerized system to blame for uninsured children

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To the editor:

Our Republican led Missouri state government has come up with an innovative way to reduce the number of people receiving Medicaid health insurance. Their efforts have been so successful that 67,000 fewer children have health insurance since the spring of 2018.

What is the secret to this success?

The state debuted an automated system in 2018 to help identify people who it thought were no longer eligible for Medicaid. But nearly 8 in 10 who the state deemed ineligible are children, who are eligible if their families make up to 300 percent of the poverty rate, or close to \$62,000 a year. So in most cases the computer system was wrong, and children were kicked off their insurance even though they were really eligible.

Most Medicaid participants received no communication about their loss of coverage, and found out when they went to the doctor. One example was a mother in St Louis who found out her son Mario's insurance had been cancelled when she took him to the doctor to be treated for ringworm. When she tried to

contact the state to get reinstated, she said it took several weeks just to have her calls returned.

Then she waited again for the state to mail her a long form to fill out to verify her income and family size, showing that she was still eligible. Mario missed much of school in December because she could not afford a doctor visit without Medicaid and his school would not let him return without a doctor's note.

Governor Parson is well aware of the problems with this new computer system , and he and his administration could fix it. And yet, they haven't. It's almost like the Governor just doesn't care about these 67,000 – and counting – kids. When our neighbors are forced to go without health care, it makes it hard for them to work, take care of their families, and harder for kids to attend school.

We must call on Gov. Parson to reenroll all who lost their health care due to bureaucratic errors and stop any more people from losing their coverage or their lives.

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