

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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Good morning Chairman Moore, Chairman Koutoujian and through you to the other committee chairs and members.

My name is Barbara Roop and I am a co-chair of the Committee for Health Care for Massachusetts.

I will briefly give a little background on the proposed amendment, and then I'll give an overview of what you are likely to hear.

- The Committee for Health Care for Massachusetts is a coalition of doctors, nurses, patient and health care advocates, and community leaders who all believe that
 - Every Mass resident should have the high quality care they need to prevent and treat illness and injury and
 - Affordable health insurance is essential to getting that care
- Last spring we decided that the best way to accomplish these goals was to ask the people whether they wanted to amend the state constitution to ensure every Massachusetts resident could get affordable health insurance.
- The answer was a resounding YES. Over 71,000 registered voters clearly stated they want this amendment on the ballot in 2006
- The Committee decided on a constitutional amendment for several reasons
 - The constitution is the place to put language describing broad principles and core responsibilities of government around which there is broad consensus
 - This proposal is based on the overwhelming support in Massachusetts for the basic principle that everyone should have access to health care and that government action is needed to make that principle a reality
 - Most important, though, a constitutional amendment gives the Legislature the discretion and power to craft the language needed with the input of all the interested parties.
- Why by initiative
 - The initiative process is specifically designed to give the people a voice so their leaders can lead the way to coverage for everyone and
 - This proposal, if ratified, will give you a mandate and flexibility to lead us all to a system of affordable coverage

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- This amendment makes “0% uninsured” the policy of the Commonwealth and creates an enforceable duty and obligation for the Legislature and Governor to implement that policy
 - It sets a clear goal and provides standards that must be met
 - Everyone must have access to affordable, comprehensive and equitably financed health insurance covering a broad range of medically necessary services.
 - The Legislature must then do what only it can do – negotiate a solution among the many parties with a stake in an efficient, sustainable health care system that provides affordable access to everyone

- It’s also very important to be clear about what this amendment doesn’t do.
 - It doesn’t prescribe or exclude any particular way of ensuring access to affordable coverage
 - It doesn’t require the State to provide insurance
 - It doesn’t require tax-based funding

- It simply requires that the Commonwealth take responsibility for ensuring all its residents can obtain affordable health insurance just as it has since the 18th century to make sure every child can get an education

- This morning you will hear about
 - The economic effects of double digit premium growth and near flat wage growth on
 - Individuals and families
 - Employers and their workers
 - The health care industry –hospitals, health centers, long term care providers, doctors and nurses
 - The legal implications of this amendment
 - Why fundamental reform is essential from
 - Advocates for increased preventive care, for communities of color, the mentally ill, the homeless and from faith based groups dedicated to expanding health care coverage
 - From the perspective of providers – hospitals, doctors, nurses, community health centers and medical students

- You may also hear some concerns about this proposal
 - First, that it will cost too much
 - We believe that there is already enough money in the system to pay for affordable coverage
 - This fiscal year, the state will spend almost \$700 million for uncompensated care – money from taxpayers, hospitals and insurers – which could be used to pay for coverage for more timely, effective and cheaper care
 - We spend 39% of every health care dollar on administration – every percentage point is worth over

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I'm here today to ask you to support H. 4444 to ensure every Massachusetts resident access to affordable health insurance.

- I believe there is a moral imperative to make sure every Massachusetts resident has access to the care they need to make the most of their lives.

But I also believe it's a smart investment in the Commonwealth's health care economy that will create the next generation of technologies, businesses and jobs and keep Massachusetts a dynamic and prosperous state

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