

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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The Health Care Constitutional Amendment

What will this Amendment do?

- Create a collective right to affordable, comprehensive coverage for medically necessary health and mental health care including prescription drugs and devices for every Massachusetts resident.
- Create an enforceable legal obligation and duty for the Legislature and Governor to enact the laws required to turn this right into reality.
- Give voters the final approval over a comprehensive plan that meets all the standards of the amendment.

Who are the Amendment's supporters?

- The army of volunteers - doctors, nurses, medical students, patients and their families, health care advocates, union members, college students, community leaders and many others – who collected almost 90,000 signatures in 7 weeks in the fall of 2003.
- The 71,385 registered voters from every legislative district in the Commonwealth who sent the amendment to the Constitutional Convention for a vote.
- The 66 endorsing organizations – professional organizations, health reform and social justice advocates, faith based organizations, unions and businesses representing over ¼ of a million people – that have joined the campaign since it began in 2003.
- The amendment's 52 dedicated legislative co-sponsors who made sure the Amendment came to a vote in the 2003-2004 Constitutional Convention
- The 153 legislators who voted YES on July 14, 2004.

Why do we need to do this?

- Health care costs are expected to double in the next 10 years growing at twice the rate of wages and 1 ½ times the rate of the economy
- Premiums continue to skyrocket with no end in sight making coverage unaffordable for more and more Massachusetts residents.
- Premium increases have outstripped wage growth every year but one between 1988 and 2004 – insurance costs grew 48% or 3.5 faster than wages in the last three years alone.
- Fewer people get their insurance at work as soaring premiums make insurance unaffordable for employers, particularly small employers, and for their workers and retirees.
- There are almost 750,000 long-term uninsured who often go without needed care and live sicker lives and die sooner as a result.
- Affordable coverage means better health and financial security for all Massachusetts families and increased productivity and profitability for Massachusetts businesses.

Where's the money?

- There is already enough money in the system to pay for universal coverage.
- \$1 billion in 2005 from taxpayers, hospitals, employers and the insured to pay for uncompensated care for the uninsured.
- \$4.8 billion in out-of-pocket for care by the uninsured and underinsured.
- \$2.2 billion in clinical and administrative savings from modest cost containment and quality improvement initiatives for state programs – 100% electronic physician claims reporting;

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automated hospital patient safety reporting; chronic care management; and a public health initiative to stop the growth in childhood/adult obesity rates.

- Over \$1 billion in social and economic benefits from new jobs, higher incomes, higher corporate profits, new tax revenues. The Urban Institute estimates that every dollar spent to expand coverage generates about \$3.00 in economic and social benefits – as much as \$1.7 billion depending on the number of Massachusetts uninsured and the type of reforms adopted.
- Total – over \$9 billion - \$5.8 billion in existing spending, \$2.2 billion in potential savings and over a billion in economic and social benefits – available to expand coverage and ensure timely, high-quality, cost-effective care for every resident.

Will my taxes go up?

- Doing nothing is a hidden tax hike on individuals and employers. It means less take home pay and lower profits as premiums rise and out-of-pocket payments for the uninsured and self-insured grow.
- Between 2000 and 2004 workers, on average, faced a whopping 50% hidden tax hike from their share of premium increases.
- Employers, on average, faced a 30% hidden tax hike cutting their profitability and their ability to create new jobs and invest in the innovation that keeps our economy competitive.
- Health care spending is expected to double over the next 10 years and reforms could cut costs by 4–13% depending on the reforms adopted. The potential savings/hidden inaction tax is \$30 - \$105 billion over ten years.

Why a Constitutional Amendment?

- Recent history offers a clear lesson: a purely legislative approach fails either because major reforms are repealed before full implementation, like the 1988 Universal Health Care Law, or suffer from funding cuts as in the 1996 public program expansions.
- Laws enacted by the people, like Clean Elections and both income tax cuts and cigarette tax increases have been repealed or ignored by the Legislature – something that can't be done with a constitutional amendment ratified by the people and enforceable by the Courts.
- Similar language in our Constitution guaranteeing every child the right to a public education provided the people, the Legislature and stakeholders with the tools to leverage fundamental education and financing reforms and require their implementation.

Why use the ballot?

- As health care costs skyrocket there has been a lot of debate but little action. It's time to break the logjam.
- When ratified, the people will have provided their elected officials with a clear mandate and the tools to move decisively, with stakeholder input, to design a system that works for everyone – patients, providers, employers and taxpayers.

What's the process?

- The first two steps have already been successfully completed – the collection of 71,385 signatures from registered voters and the first “yes” vote by 50 legislators in the 2003-04 Constitutional Convention.
- The next step is a second “yes” vote by 50 legislators in the 2005-06 Constitutional Convention.
- The voters will have the final say in November 2006. If a majority votes to ratify, Massachusetts residents will have a collective constitutional right to affordable health and mental health coverage.

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