

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

649 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 8 ♦ Cambridge, MA 02139 ♦ (617) 868-1280

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mass. Teachers Give Big Boost to Health Care Amendment

Second 'Yes' at May ConCon Will Send Amendment to November Ballot

February 16, 2006 (BOSTON, MA) — The **Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign (HCMC)**, a citizen-led initiative to amend the Constitution to guarantee access to affordable health care for all Mass residents, today announced that the **Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA)** and the **Massachusetts Federation of Teachers (MFT)** have both endorsed the Health Care Constitutional Amendment.

The endorsements give a huge boost to the Campaign with the grassroots power of the MTA representing 95,000 educators, administrators and educational support professionals, and the MFT, representing over 22,000 teachers, school nurses, bus drivers and librarians.

"Teachers know that good health is the foundation of a good education, which is why we support this Amendment," said MTA President Catherine A. Boudreau. "Children who miss school or suffer the effects of poor physical or mental health cannot learn and thrive as they should."

"Health care is a critical issue for our members and the families of the children we teach. A Constitutional Amendment guaranteeing access to affordable health care coverage enables the Commonwealth to achieve this historic goal," said Kathleen A. Kelley, president, Massachusetts Federation of Teachers.

The teachers are the latest in a growing number of unions across the state to join Massachusetts Labor for Health Care, which is spearheading organizing efforts among workers on the Amendment. "As the health care crisis deepens for working people, they and their unions are seeing that only a solution that guarantees quality care to everyone is the way to go. We think the Constitutional Amendment is how we'll make real change happen," said Russ Davis, executive director of Massachusetts Jobs With Justice and a leader of the labor group.

The Constitutional Amendment would require the state to guarantee that every Massachusetts resident has access to affordable coverage for medically necessary health and mental health care services including prescription drugs and devices – but the Amendment does not restrict the Legislature on *how* to provide the access. Sent to legislators as a ballot petition by 71,385 registered voters in January 2004, the Amendment received the first of two required approvals by the Constitutional Convention that July by an overwhelming 153 to 41 margin – far surpassing the required 50. The Amendment must now receive a second "yes" vote by 50 legislators at this year's Constitutional Convention before it goes to the voters this November for final ratification. The voters will have the final say over any plan developed by the Legislature and Governor that meets all the standards set out in the Amendment.

Mark Blum, executive director of America's Agenda: Health Care for All, a national partner of the HCMC, said "Endorsement of the health care amendment by both Massachusetts teachers' unions is of enormous importance. The right to a good education and good health care are cornerstones of a successful society." He added, "The endorsements by the state's educators are powerful evidence of the interdependence of these two basic rights."

-more-

www.HealthCareForMass.org

Fax: (617) 868-1363

Paid for by The Committee for Health Care for Massachusetts

“The Amendment is the only proposal on the table that will benefit the uninsured, underinsured and fully insured alike because it requires us all to work together to expand access, cut costs and improve quality at the same time,” said Barbara Roop, co-chair of the HCMC. “Only by addressing all three issues at once can we achieve affordable, comprehensive coverage for every resident.”

“We are thrilled that the MFT and MTA have joined us to make sure their members, retirees and students will always have the affordable coverage they deserve,” said Dr. John Goodson, co-chair of the HCMC. “Our state constitution already guarantees their students access to education, now they and their students will have secure health coverage as well.”

The text of the Amendment reads:

Upon ratification of this amendment and thereafter, it shall be the obligation and duty of the Legislature and executive officials, on behalf of the Commonwealth, to enact and implement such laws, subject to approval by the voters at a state wide election, as will ensure that no Massachusetts resident lacks comprehensive, affordable, and equitably financed health insurance coverage for all medically necessary preventive, acute and chronic health care and mental health care services, prescription drugs and devices.

To learn more about the **Massachusetts Teachers Association**, please visit:
<http://www.massteacher.org/>.

To learn more about the **Massachusetts Federation of Teachers**, please visit:
<http://www.mfeducator.org/index.html>.

HCMC link to the list of organizations who have endorsed the Campaign to date:

Organizations: <http://www.healthcareformass.org/endorse/endorsements-org.shtml>

###