

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“The right to affordable, comprehensive health coverage for every resident secures the historic achievements of our elected officials”

Constitutional Amendment effort to guarantee healthcare coverage sees recent gains as important but “right” to care is key to securing gains

November 2, 2005 (Boston, MA) — The Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign (HCMC), the team fighting for a Constitutional Amendment to guarantee quality healthcare to all citizens, today released the following statement about recent developments in healthcare reform:

“This week, Speaker DiMasi joined President Travaglini and Governor Romney as a leader in the fight for coverage for every Massachusetts resident,” said Barbara Roop, co-chair of the campaign. “Such unity on an issue so critical to the health and welfare of the people of the Commonwealth and to its economy cannot be underestimated.

“The sweeping proposals that have been introduced by the Senate President, Speaker of the House and Governor Romney reflect the belief, shared by more than 80% of their constituents, that every Massachusetts resident deserves access to the same high quality care,” she said.

“While the Commonwealth seems poised to make a major step forward, work remains if we are truly to have health care justice in Massachusetts,” said Dr. John Goodson, co-chair of the campaign and a physician at Massachusetts General Hospital.

“The job won't be complete until every resident has a right to affordable, comprehensive and fairly funded coverage for medically necessary health and mental health care and that right becomes a reality through laws enacted by the Legislature and approved by the voters. A right to affordable, comprehensive coverage for all Massachusetts residents will guarantee that the historic achievements of this Legislature will serve as the solid foundation for securing the social and economic benefits that come with truly affordable, comprehensive coverage for everyone,” Goodson added.

The Campaign seeks a second ‘yes’ vote (50 or more votes) by the Legislature, which will put the matter in the hands of the voters on the November 2006 ballot. The Legislature voted overwhelmingly in favor of the amendment with a vote of 153 to 41 at last year’s Constitutional Convention.

The Constitutional Amendment will require the Commonwealth to find a way to guarantee every Massachusetts resident access to affordable coverage for medically necessary health and mental health care services including prescription drugs and devices. However, it does not tell the Legislature *how* to achieve this goal. Once the Legislature has, with stakeholder input, developed a concrete plan that meets all the Amendment’s standards, it will be submitted to the voters for their final approval.

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The text of the proposed Constitutional 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 statewide 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.

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