

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Care Amendment Reaches Key Support Level; June Vote Expected To Move Forward Health Insurance For All

May 12, 2004 (Cambridge, MA)—The Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign today said it has reached a threshold level of support of legislators in favor of moving the Constitutional Amendment to the 2006 ballot. The measure, when passed by voters, will require the state to make sure every resident can get access to affordable health care.

“We are a little disappointed that the Constitutional Convention recessed today without a vote since we are confident we had the votes we need to move it to next year’s ConCon. When the Legislature gives its sign off next year, we look forward to the voters’ mandate that will come in 2006,” said Barbara Roop, the co-chair of the campaign which gathered over 71,000 signatures of registered voters in eight weeks last fall to put the Amendment in play.

The Amendment, calling for state officials to ensure access to “affordable” health insurance coverage for all residents, will now be before the Constitutional Convention set for June.

With estimates of 600,000 or more uninsured people in the state and thousands more afraid they will lose the coverage they have, the momentum for the measure is gaining ground among legislators.

“Large numbers of uninsured put pressure on our health care system, which drives up costs to taxpayers, workers, employers, providers and hospitals,” said Dr. John Goodson, the other co-chair of the effort and a doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital for the past 30 years.

Proponents of the Amendment decided to offer the Amendment to the State’s Constitution as a way to get health insurance coverage for all because legislative attempts in the past have failed.

“Without a way to ‘lock in’ the fundamental reforms needed to ensure affordable health care coverage for all Massachusetts residents, stakeholders have no reason to come to the table to design a streamlined, efficient and equitable system that provides everyone with the high quality, coordinated care they deserve,” Roop said.

Once the measure receives support at the Constitutional Convention in June, and again in 2005-2006, voters will get their say in November 2006.

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“We have tolerated an extraordinary level of inequality and inefficiency in our health care system—we now spend almost 40 percent of every health care dollar on administration, dollars that could be better spent providing direct care,” Goodson said.

“We have failed to extend the marvelous innovations of health care to those who work part time, are unemployed, or those whose jobs do not include health insurance. We have failed to achieve full health value for the dollars we spend,” he added.

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