

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Senator Moore's Bill Adds To Vigorous Health Care Debate

November 29, 2004 (Boston, MA) —The Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign (HCMC) today released the following statement in response to Senator Moore's health care bill announced this afternoon.

"Although we have not yet had time to review the details of Senator Moore's proposal, we are thrilled that the Chairman has added this thoughtful proposal to what is shaping up as a vigorous debate over approaches to expanding access, controlling costs and improving health care quality for all Massachusetts residents," said Barbara Roop, the co-chair of the HCMC. "His proposals for increasing transparency in nurse staffing, reducing medical malpractice costs and expanding access are major contributions to reaching the goal of affordable access to health care for all Massachusetts residents," Roop added.

"The Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign is delighted by the recent activity on the health care front – from Senate President Travaglini's proposal to Governor Romney's proposal, and the proposal expected from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Roadmap Project, Health Care for All, MASS-CARE, and others. The Constitutional Amendment we are proposing that had an initial victory last summer in the Legislature represents a permanent commitment to affordable access to medically necessary health and mental health care, including prescription drugs and devices. It is designed to be a platform for meaningful health care reform that will benefit all stakeholders in our health care system," said Roop.

"We are delighted that the Amendment has contributed to the momentum for change as leaders from all sectors put their plans on the table and prepare for the vigorous debate ahead," she added.

The Amendment would require the state to make sure – one way or another – that every Massachusetts resident can get affordable coverage for medically necessary health and mental health care services including prescription drugs.

As a ballot petition, sent to the Legislature by 71,385 registered voters, it needed only 50 legislators to vote "yes" to move on to the next step – a "yes" vote in the 2005-2006 Constitutional Convention.

The Amendment complements recent efforts underway to design reforms to guarantee every Massachusetts resident access to high quality, cost-effective care when they need it and to end the cost shifting responsible for the

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skyrocketing premiums that are rapidly pricing middle income, working families and small and medium-sized employers out of the insurance market. “The Amendment will be the glue that holds the plan designed by our best and brightest together over time,” Roop added.

The Constitutional Amendment requires elected officials to reform, with stakeholder input, our health care system to ensure access to affordable health insurance for all residents – the key to getting the high quality care that will over time reduce costs. Reputable studies show these reforms can be paid for by redirecting money already spent on care for the uninsured and wasted on complicated and burdensome bureaucracies. These changes will mean getting better value for our health care dollar by using current dollars for direct investments in the health and welfare of all Massachusetts residents and in the vitality of our health care economy.

Supporters of the measure point to several reasons why its passage is necessary, including:

- Skyrocketing premiums that are rapidly making health coverage unaffordable for middle income families and for small and medium-sized employers which, in turn, threatens the financial stability of Massachusetts families and of the health care system which accounts for almost 25% of our economy.
- Rapidly growing uninsurance rates that threaten the health and financial well-being of Massachusetts families and fuel huge disparities in health outcomes in communities of color.
- The failure to develop a legislative approach to universal coverage after over a decade of debate.

Business leaders, small business owners and health care providers have expressed support for the measure. Several small business owners testified at a legislative hearing earlier this spring or have submitted testimony to the legislative committee reviewing the proposal.

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.

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