

# HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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## Additional Health Care Proposals Add Momentum

### *Health Care For Massachusetts Campaign Welcomes Stepped-Up Discussion on Best Ways To Guarantee Access to All Residents*

**December 1, 2004 (Boston, MA)**—The Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign (HCMC) today said the additional health care reform proposals announced recently with more to be released today amount to “the best momentum for reforming health care in over 15 years. It is a clear sign that the political will is there to seriously address one of the most fundamental injustices in our society today – the lack of access to high quality health and mental health care based on income,” said Dr. John Goodson, co-chair of the HCMC.

The HCMC has proposed that a Constitutional amendment be enacted which would forever guarantee access to affordable, comprehensive health care for all Massachusetts residents. 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, cost-effective care that will over time reduce costs.

“We applaud John McDonough and Health Care For All’s efforts in expanding health care access as they offer their latest proposal for reaching near-universal coverage. We also want to applaud the plans put forward by MASS-CARE, the Massachusetts Nurses Association and the Associated Industries of Massachusetts. These proposals underline how critical an issue access to affordable, high quality health care is and how determined our political leaders, health care advocates and business have become in finding a solution since we launched our amendment effort,” said Barbara Roop, the co-chair of the HCMC.

“The major reforms announced last week and this week run the gamut from single payer to employer mandate to a pure market solution. Each has its contribution to make to the ongoing debate,” she added.

“The question is no longer whether we will have affordable access to health care for all of our residents but rather how. We will have it—one way or another,” Roop said.

“Our Amendment—the Affordable Health Insurance Constitutional Amendment—will serve as the solid foundation upon which reforms designed by stakeholders, advocates and our elected officials will be fully implemented and fully funded in the future,” she added.

The Constitutional Amendment we are proposing that had an initial victory last summer in the Legislature represents a permanent commitment to affordable access

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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 2005-06 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 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.

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 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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