

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MGH Nursing Students Join ‘Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign’ Leaders for State House Visit

February 14, 2005 (BOSTON, MA) — More than 20 graduate nursing students of the **Massachusetts General Hospital’s Institute of Health Professions (MGHIHP)** will accompany members of the **Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign (HCMC)** at the State House tomorrow as they push for a second vote on a Constitutional Amendment guaranteeing every Massachusetts resident access to affordable, comprehensive and equitably funded coverage for health and mental health care, including prescription drugs.

The students are joining HCMC members for the first of several planned days of visits to express thanks to the many senators and representatives who voted overwhelmingly last summer in support of the Constitutional Amendment. The group will also update legislators on the Campaign – a citizen-led initiative that many political insiders view as having significantly contributed to the building momentum for major health care reform in this legislative session.

The students will be led by their professor, Patricia Lussier-Duynstee, PhD, RN, an assistant professor of the Institute’s graduate program in nursing who teaches health care policy and community health nursing. Dr. Duynstee’s practice and research areas are in community health, vulnerable populations, behavior change and harm reduction models.

“We are excited to have the MGH nursing students with us as we meet with legislators,” said Barbara Roop, the co-chair of the HCMC. “These students have, through their clinical training, already seen up close and personal what it means to their patients and to their professional futures, when 650,000 people are uninsured in our state.”

The Constitutional Amendment requires 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. The Amendment does not, however, tell the Legislature *how* to achieve this goal. It is instead designed as a political and legal foundation for the kind of legislative proposals that have been made by Senate President Travaglini, Governor Romney and advocacy groups like Health Care for All and MASS-CARE. 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.

“This requirement adds an important safeguard to ensure that the interests of *every* stakeholder, from patients and providers to taxpayers and employers, will be taken into consideration,” said Dr. John Goodson, co-chair of the HCMC.

Sent to legislators as an initiative petition by 71,385 registered voters in January 2004, the Amendment received overwhelming, preliminary approval with 153 legislators voting for the proposal – far surpassing the required 50 votes. The Amendment now needs a second “yes” vote by 50 legislators at this Session’s Constitutional Convention before it goes to voters in November 2006 for final ratification.

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www.HealthCareForMass.org

Fax: (617) 868-1363

Paid for by The Committee for Health Care for Massachusetts