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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AFFORDABLE HEALTH INSURANCE FOR ALL MASSACHUSETTS
RESIDENTS – CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PASSES MAJOR HURDLE**

Cambridge, MA, 12/5/2003 - Today, members of the Committee for Health Care for Massachusetts filed the certified signatures needed to move their initiative petition amending the state constitution to the next stage of consideration. "We are delighted to have passed this milestone," said Dr. John Goodson, committee co-chair. "The collection of over 71,000 certified signatures is a tribute to the hard work of many individuals and organizations across the state. It also reflects the powerful consensus in the Commonwealth that every Massachusetts resident should have access to high quality health care.

The ballot question amends the Massachusetts Constitution to make it the Legislature's duty to find a way to make sure no Massachusetts resident lacks affordable, comprehensive and equitably financed health insurance covering all medically necessary health and mental health care services, prescription drugs and devices. If the voters approve this measure in 2006, Massachusetts would be the first state in the nation to make this fundamental principle a part of the state constitution."

Of the seven ballot questions certified by the Attorney General last September, the petition for affordable health insurance is the only one that collected the signatures needed to move to the next phase of consideration.

Today, almost 600,000 Massachusetts residents have no health insurance. Double-digit premium hikes are making health insurance unaffordable for middle-income workers as well as for their employers. Hospitals and nursing homes face growing financial pressures. Providers are buried in paperwork. Almost 40% of every dollar spent on health care (about \$16 billion) goes to administration instead of provider care.

Barbara Waters Roop, committee co-chair, policy analyst and attorney, said that this proposal grows out of a broadly shared dissatisfaction with the health care system.

"No one benefits from a system that shuts the door to quality care on people without insurance. This amendment establishes the principle that everyone in Massachusetts deserves high quality health care and will make the principle a reality."

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Following certification by Secretary Galvin, the proposal will be sent to the Legislature for the approval of 25% of its members meeting in constitutional convention. If approved in two consecutive Legislative sessions, it will appear on the November 2006 ballot.

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The Committee for Health Care for Massachusetts was established by a diverse group of frontline health care providers, patient advocates, leaders of the business community, a trustee of a major teaching hospital network, the Chairman of the Democratic State Committee and attorneys and policy analysts dedicated to expanding access to high quality health care for all Massachusetts residents.

The members of the committee are dedicated to two basic principles:

- that no one in Massachusetts should go without the high quality care they need to prevent and to treat illness and injury
- that comprehensive, affordable insurance coverage is essential to obtaining that care and to sustaining one of the world's leading health care delivery systems.

The Committee has come together for the specific purpose of amending the Massachusetts Constitution to make it the Commonwealth's duty to make sure every Massachusetts resident gets affordable, comprehensive health insurance including coverage for all medically necessary health and mental health care services, prescription medications and devices.

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