

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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

Universal Access to Health Care Coverage for Massachusetts is Based on the Original Constitutional Language of John Adams

Amending the Massachusetts State Constitution to ensure universal access to health care coverage extends the principles established in 1779 by John Adams.

In his biography of John Adams, Pulitzer Prize-winner David McCullough describes the writing of the original Massachusetts Constitution. Drawing on the models already completed by the other newly constituted states, Adams proposed a bicameral government with an elected governor and an independent appointed judiciary that continues to serve us.

But Adams went further by adding broader responsibilities for the state's government in Section II, Chapter 6. The original language states

“... it shall be the duty of legislators and magistrates in all future periods of this commonwealth to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences and all seminaries of them, public schools, and grammar schools in the towns; ... and to countenance and inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and frugality, honesty and punctuality in their dealings, sincerity and good humor, and all social affections, and generous sentiments among the people.”

With this language, McCullough states that “...Adams was declaring it the ‘duty’ of government not only to provide education but the ‘cherish’ the interests of literature and science...” and the language was ratified by the delegates to the constitutional convention without change.

Adams understood that an informed and literate public is a necessary condition for a vibrant democracy and he wrote a uniquely Massachusetts expression of the social contract into the constitution, namely that it was the government, its legislators and judges, that were responsible for being certain that no resident lacked access to education. Public education, the bedrock foundation of our government, was the result of a conscious and deliberate decision by Adams and his peers.

The language of this amendment for affordable health insurance is modeled after the language of Adams. When ratified by a majority vote in November, 2006, our elected representatives which form the government of the Commonwealth, will be responsible for ensuring that no resident of the state lacks access to health care because of economic, social, ethnic or political status. Just as John Adams' language ultimately forced massive education reforms in the 1990s – so too will this amendment force reforms to ensure universal coverage and access to health care for everyone in Massachusetts.

www.healthcareformass.org