

LET'S FIX HEALTH CARE ONCE AND FOR ALL.



THE HEALTH CARE AMENDMENT

WHY WE NEED TO ACT.

Skyrocketing premiums threaten us all. They threaten our health and our financial security. Employers squeezed by rising premiums shift costs to workers, cut coverage or cut jobs. More than a half-million Massachusetts residents have no health insurance and most of the rest of us are struggling to keep what we have. Why? Because we know the uninsured live sicker lives and die younger because they don't get the care they need.

IT ISN'T JUST BAD FOR THEM; IT'S BAD FOR ALL OF US.

People without health insurance still get sick and need health care. If they can't pay for it themselves we do. **Last year taxpayers, employers and hospitals paid \$1.1 billion — almost \$3 million a day — for uninsured people who couldn't delay care any longer.** Much of that care could have been prevented. All too much of it was too little too late.



WE ARE PAYING MORE AND GETTING LESS.

We already spend more per person on health care than any state in the nation. But costs keep going up. We're paying higher premiums, higher co-pays, higher prescription drug prices. We're watching our benefits shrink. We're waiting longer to see a doctor, schedule a procedure, book a test, or see a specialist.

GREAT HEALTH CARE, NOT-SO-GREAT COVERAGE.

Massachusetts health care institutions are the envy of the country. But health care coverage in Massachusetts is expensive and spotty. Too many of us have coverage gaps so big that we're just one accident or illness away from losing our life's savings. A Constitutional amendment guaranteeing every resident access to affordable coverage will ensure that the quality of everyone's care matches the quality of our outstanding medical and research institutions.

WHAT THE AMENDMENT SAYS.

"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 the approval of the voters at a statewide 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."

THE POWER OF AN AMENDMENT.

The surest way to change the current system is to pass an amendment to the State Constitution. (It's been done 120 times before.) The health care amendment requires affordable coverage for every resident. No more stalling. No more elaborate formulas and exotic income tests. No more laws enacted and then ignored, underfunded or repealed. The Legislature and Governor will be accountable for passing laws to make coverage affordable for everyone — one way or another.

LOSING YOUR INSURANCE IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK.

One in four people in our state went without coverage for some period last year. Why? They lost their job, changed jobs, got divorced, lost a spouse, turned 19 and had to leave their parents' plan, or got sick and couldn't work. Unpaid medical bills trigger half of all bankruptcies. And three out of four of those people had insurance but didn't know until their bills overwhelmed them that they lacked comprehensive coverage.

MORE JOBS WON'T FIX THE PROBLEM.

Three out of four of those without insurance work one or more jobs. The fastest growing group of uninsured are moderate income people who can't afford the coverage their employer offers anymore. Squeezed by rising premiums, more and more employers are offering stripped down benefit packages with high deductibles or dropping coverage altogether.

BUT FIXING THE PROBLEM CAN CREATE JOBS.

High health care costs are a drag on the Massachusetts economy. They make employers reluctant to create quality jobs that come with health benefits. They threaten the competitiveness of Massachusetts companies. And they eat into investments in innovation that are critical to a strong economy. Massachusetts is the only state in the union that lost population. One major reason is our high cost of living. Health care is a large part of that. If we don't get a handle on health care costs, we could continue to lose high-paying jobs and talented people to fill them.

ONE DOLLAR GETS YOU THREE.



Health care is almost one-fourth of our state's economy — about 700,000 jobs. Expanding coverage is an investment in the health care economy — an economic stimulus that benefits every one of us. Every dollar we put in returns three in the form of new jobs, higher incomes, higher profits and new tax revenues.

HALF-WAY TO THE BALLOT.

A Constitutional amendment of any kind has to win passage in two consecutive legislative sessions. In 2003, a strong coalition of doctors, nurses, patients and their families, small business owners, labor unions, medical students, faith-based groups, health care advocates, social and economic justice groups, community leaders, elders and high school students collected almost 90,000 signatures from 343 communities and every legislative district across the State. The amendment was sent to the Legislature to be considered.

At the April 2004 hearing, Peter Slavin, CEO of Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston Public Health Commissioner John Auerbach, Karen Higgins, President of the Massachusetts Nurses Association, and Nicolas Carballeira of the Latin American Health Institute, among others, testified for the amendment.

For months supporters called and wrote their legislators to get a vote. On July 14, 2004 they got it. The amendment passed 153 to 41 — three times the number we needed!

NOW FOR THE HARD PART.

Having won in 2004, we now need to win again in the 2005–2006 Constitutional Convention, where both houses meet and vote as one body. When it passes a second time, the voters will decide in November 2006 if they want a permanent guarantee of access to the highest quality health care for every Massachusetts resident.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Affordable, comprehensive coverage. Financial security. A solid foundation for a health care fix that stays fixed. A guarantee that you, your family and friends have the final say at the ballot box over how the system is reformed.

ONCE AND FOR ALL LET'S FIX HEALTH CARE

Help us pass the Health Care Amendment. Please fill out this coupon.

Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____ Zip _____

Phone (Work) _____ (Home) _____

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