

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Care Amendment Campaign Gaining Momentum; Supporters Plan Action for May 10th Constitutional Convention

BOSTON, MA – February 10, 2006 – Representatives from 30 labor and community groups have joined 50 other organizations committed to support passage of the Health Care Amendment that would guarantee every Massachusetts resident access to affordable coverage for medically necessary health and mental health care services. The amendment will be on the agenda of the Constitutional Convention slated to meet again on May 10th.

The Health Care Constitutional Amendment is receiving growing support as more and more groups see it as an essential foundation for real reform. On January 25th representatives from 30 labor and community groups statewide met with members of the campaign to discuss an action plan. The groups agreed that getting the Amendment on the ballot is critical for achieving comprehensive health care coverage for every Massachusetts resident that is affordable and fair. The amendment needs 50 votes at the next ConCon to qualify for the November ballot.

“While many of our member organizations support immediate action on some of the health care reforms that the Governor and Legislature are considering, the Constitutional Amendment is an opportunity to move towards a real solution to the health care crisis in Massachusetts,” said Rand Wilson, co-chair of Jobs with Justice’s Health Care Action Committee. “Passing the amendment will ‘lock-in’ progress made by this Legislature and build momentum to finish the job.”

The constitutional amendment would require the state to guarantee every Massachusetts resident access to affordable coverage for medically necessary health and mental health care services including prescription drugs and devices – but the amendment does not restrict the Legislature on *how* to provide that access. Sent to legislators as a ballot petition by 71,385 registered voters in July of ‘04, the Amendment received overwhelming, preliminary approval with 153 votes – far surpassing the required 50. The Amendment must now receive a second “yes” vote by 50 legislators at the upcoming Constitutional Convention in May, and then go to voters in November 2006 for final ratification. Once the laws are enacted to ensure universal coverage, proposed plans will go to voters for their approval.

“The amendment will assure two steps forward stays two steps forward. Unfortunately we've seen the incremental efforts to address and improve health coverage eroded repeatedly to the detriment of those most in need,” said Julie Pinkham, executive director of the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA).

-more-

www.HealthCareForMass.org

Fax: (617) 868-1665

Paid for by The Committee for Health Care for Massachusetts

The text of the proposed Constitutional 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 of the voters at a state wide election, as will ensure that no Massachusetts resident lacks comprehensive, affordable, and equitably finance health insurance coverage for all medically necessary preventive, acute and chronic health care and mental health care services, prescription drugs and devices.

“We see the Health Care Amendment as creating the legal and political framework for reaching a realistic, sustainable solution to the health care affordability crisis in Massachusetts,” said Barbara Roop, co-chair of the HCMC. “The growing grassroots support is a powerful reminder that the need for health care reform is a ‘kitchen table’ issue debated by working families around the Commonwealth not just a public policy debate for the State House,” she added.

Mark Blum, executive director of America's Agenda: Health Care for All said, “Assurance of the right to affordable health care for all is a measure of the basic decency of any society. With this Constitutional Amendment, Massachusetts will bring hope to millions of American families that one day they, too, may have this right protected once and for all.”

###

www.HealthCareForMass.org

Fax: (617) 868-1665

Paid for by The Committee for Health Care for Massachusetts