

HEALTH CARE FOR MASSACHUSETTS CAMPAIGN

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Physicians Back ‘Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign’

‘Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility’ Joins Growing List in Support of Constitutional Amendment to Ensure Health Coverage for All Massachusetts Residents

March 9, 2005 (BOSTON, MA) — The Health Care for Massachusetts Campaign (HCMC) today announced that the **Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility (GBPSR)** has endorsed its Health Care Constitutional Amendment. The 1,000-member, Massachusetts medical organization is an affiliate of **Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR)**, a national organization of over 30,000 physicians, health care professionals and supporters, known as "the active conscience of the medical community."

The GBPSR's announcement comes on the heels of the **American Medical Student Association's (AMSA)** recent endorsement, and joins numerous other health and business organizations, and leaders across the state.

"For those who treat patients and those who govern, there is no greater social responsibility than ensuring access to affordable health care for every resident in Massachusetts," said John O. Pastore, M.D., President, Physicians for Social Responsibility.

The constitutional amendment would require the state to guarantee that every Massachusetts resident has 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 the access. Sent to legislators as a ballot petition by 71,385 registered voters last July, 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 this year's Constitutional Convention, 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 endorsement by such an esteemed organization is not only respected and appreciated, it is telling,” said Dr. John Goodson, co-chair of the HCMC. “The decision by the Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility to support our amendment further validates the need, and moral obligation, to make a permanent commitment to provide universal coverage to everyone in the Commonwealth.”

“There is not only a moral component in this, there is an economic one. The lack of commitment has meant a history of on again/off again reform that has been costly and fruitless,” said Barbara Roop, the HCMC's other co-chair. “We are gratified by Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility's desire to help the people of Massachusetts build the solid foundation required to fix our health care system once and for all.”

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The Constitutional Amendment requires the Legislature, with stakeholder input, to reform our health care system to ensure access to affordable health insurance for all residents – the key to getting the high quality care that will over time improve health and reduce costs. Reputable studies show these reforms can be paid for by redirecting money already spent on care for the uninsured and wasted on complicated and burdensome bureaucracies. These changes will mean getting better value for our health care dollar by using current dollars for direct investments in the health and welfare of all Massachusetts residents and in the vitality of our health care economy.

Supporters of the measure point to several reasons why its passage is necessary, including:

- Skyrocketing premiums that are rapidly making health coverage unaffordable for middle income families and for small and medium-sized employers which, in turn, threatens the financial stability of Massachusetts families and of the health care system which accounts for almost 25% of our economy.
- Rapidly growing uninsurance rates that threaten the health and financial well-being of Massachusetts families and fuel huge disparities in health outcomes in communities of color.
- The failure to develop a legislative approach to universal coverage after over a decade of debate.

The text of the 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 by the voters at a state wide 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.

About GBPSR

Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility (GBPSR) has over 1,000 members in Eastern Massachusetts who individually and collectively work on a variety of issues relating to health, including quality and access to health care, environmental pollution, militarism and war, community and personal violence, and social justice and human rights. To learn more, please visit <http://psr.igc.org/>.

GBPSR is an affiliate of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), a national organization of over 30,000 physicians, health care professionals and supporters. PSR, known as "the active conscience of the medical community," was formed in 1961 to address the health consequences of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. It has since broadened its mission to include the health consequences of environmental pollution and degradation, and also the reduction of violence and its causes. PSR's international federation, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, was awarded the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to translate the abstract concept of nuclear war into medical and personal terms. To learn more, please visit www.psr.org.

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