



Budget Puts Foundation for Health Care Reform At Risk

Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage is pleased that Ohio lawmakers supported changes in HB 1 to make health insurance available to an additional 109,000 Ohioans by:

- lowering premiums in the Open Enrollment Program, allowing 52,000 additional Ohioans with pre-existing conditions to afford health insurance in the individual market;
- allowing dependents up to age 28 to be covered by family health insurance policies at no cost to employers, providing a coverage option to an age group that is generally healthy yet has the highest rate of being uninsured;
- providing cafeteria plans for uninsured employees of small businesses to buy coverage with pre-tax dollars, saving these workers up to 30 percent of the premium cost; and
- requiring insurers to report the portion of premium dollars spent on health care compared to marketing, administration and profits— vital information for making health care more affordable.

In addition, we are pleased that the renewal period for parents on Medicaid was extended to 12 months, a change that will ease administrative burdens for parents as well as counties overwhelmed with unemployed people seeking services.

However, House Bill 1 leaves health care for the most vulnerable Ohioans in critical condition. While we recognize and are thankful that some funds were restored to community health centers, we remain concerned that the steep cuts to health care programs across the board are a step backwards for health care reform.

The devastating cuts to health care— including community mental health, alcohol and drug treatment, prenatal care, services to allow elderly Ohioans and Ohioans with disabilities to remain in their homes, and much more—further undermine an already overburdened health care safety net. As well, a variety of Medicaid and other services are funded with tobacco prevention foundation dollars frozen in current litigation. As the recession creates increased demand for prenatal and child health, mental health, and community health care services, these services will be scarce or unavailable.

Most approaches to health care reform—nationally and at the state level—build on the current health care delivery system to expand affordable coverage options to more people.

By slashing funding for critical health care services in Ohio we not only threaten the health of Ohioans, we seriously set back Ohio's ability to achieve health care reform in the near future.

*For more information, contact Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage
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