

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

PRESS STATEMENT

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Health care advocates decry Governor's veto of immigrant health coverage

Note the Pilgrims were among the first immigrants

(BOSTON, MA) – Health Care For All, the Massachusetts health care consumer advocacy organization, expressed dismay that Governor Mitt Romney vetoed a health care provision in the Fiscal Year 2004 supplemental appropriation for legally present elder and disabled immigrants. “We are disappointed that the Governor refused to provide MassHealth coverage to these seniors and disabled immigrants who are here legally,” said John McDonough, Executive Director of Health Care For All. “Their health care needs are not going away” he notes “and their only option will be to use our overcrowded emergency rooms in place of regular preventive care. This is more expensive and adds to the overall cost of health care.”

McDonough concluded, “it is noteworthy that the Governor vetoed this important health coverage the night before we celebrated some of America’s first immigrants. We call on the legislature to override this veto and give these people an opportunity to get the basic health coverage they need.”

The section the Governor vetoed would allow the state to provide basic coverage to some 2,500 elderly and disabled legal immigrants. These individuals were part of a group of 10,000 legally present immigrants, including working parents, lost MassHealth (Medicaid) health coverage on August 1 as a result of cuts in the FY 04 budget. The section required no new appropriations and relied on already-allocated funds that appear to be available.

All 10,000 adults are lawful, tax-paying residents of the Commonwealth and include immigrants fleeing persecution in their home countries, immigrants with permission to live in the US because conditions are unsafe in their home countries, as well as certain legal permanent residents who will not be eligible for federal benefits until five years from receiving legal permanent status.