

PRESS RELEASE

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House Budget Leaves Many Out in the Cold

Thousands of Children, Immigrants, Unemployed Adults Continue to Wait for Health Care

Boston, MA – Late last night the Massachusetts House of Representatives engrossed their budget proposal for fiscal year 2005. While the final health budget makes small increases over the House Ways and Means proposal, it still leaves tens of thousands of people without access to medical care.

Despite the efforts of legislators, the budget failed to provide adequate funding to the Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP), disabled and senior legal immigrants, and low-income adults.

CMSP is a basic health coverage program for children who have no other means of accessing health insurance. Today, over 13,000 uninsured children are waiting to enroll in this program.

“This program is supposed to make sure that any Massachusetts child can get health coverage, but without additional funding, thousands of children will continue to wait for health care,” said Lucy Meadows, Coordinator of the Children's Health Access Coalition.

“It's not just children who are left waiting in the House's budget,” added John E. McDonough, Executive Director of Health Care For All, “tens of thousands of very low-income residents – legal immigrants and the long-term unemployed – will be left without access to health coverage under the House's budget proposal. We look forward to working with the Senate to make sure that these vulnerable residents are able to access the care that they need.”

The legislature overrode a gubernatorial veto in January to restore health coverage to elderly and disabled legal immigrants. This coverage is scheduled to begin in June 2004. The House proposal eliminates this population again from receiving medical care under MassHealth, beginning in October. Under their proposal, these residents will be able to access medical care for just four months.

The House also appropriated funding to only accommodate approximately 23,000 people in the MassHealth Essential program. That program serves low income long-term unemployed adults. The administration expects around 36,000 people to qualify for the program, which began enrolling people last October.