



HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

PLEASE SUPPORT THESE FY 2019 HOUSE BUDGET AMENDMENTS:

Health Insurance:

INSURANCE PROVIDER DIRECTORIES • AMENDMENT #1268 • SPONSOR: REP. BARBER

Families and individuals seeking care in Massachusetts are often unable to find accurate, reliable information about the providers available to them through their insurance carrier. After detailed discussions, doctors, hospitals, health insurance plans and consumers advocates have agreed on a plan to make sure patients can access accurate, searchable provider directories. The amendment requires all health plans to make updates based on information received from providers at least monthly, and to ensure that their electronic directories are easily searchable. It also establishes a taskforce to develop further recommendations to ensure accurate information, with consistency across carriers. This amendment is also a priority of the Children's Mental Health Campaign. ***Amendment #1268 establishes comprehensive requirements on health plans to make accurate provider directories available to the public.***

Oral Health:

PERIODONTAL COVERAGE RESTORATION • AMENDMENT #580 • SPONSOR: REP. SCIBAK

Periodontal disease is a chronic bacterial infection of the gums and bone that surround teeth. When left untreated, this disease causes irreversible gum and bone loss, leading to tooth loss. It also directly impacts chronic disease outcomes including those of diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Periodontal disease can also lead to low birth weight and premature birth. Coverage for the treatment of periodontal disease is critical to improving the oral *and* general health of the adult population. ***Amendment #580 adds language and \$12 million (over half federally reimbursed) to MassHealth to reinstate coverage for periodontal services for adult MassHealth enrollees.***

DPH OFFICE OF ORAL HEALTH • AMENDMENT #976 • SPONSOR: REP. HOGAN

Oral health is an often neglected factor in overall health. The Office of Oral Health in the Department of Public Health (DPH) provides essential dental care services to people with developmental disabilities, children and others. The office works with schools, health care providers, state agencies and others to support effective oral health care. ***Amendment #976 is a no-cost amendment that removes an earmark to free up sufficient funding for the operation of DPH's Office of Oral Health.***

DENTAL PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN • AMENDMENT #812 • SPONSOR: REP. CAHILL

The Forsyth Kids program serves 51 schools to provide school-based oral health care to approximately 1,700 underserved children annually in Boston, Cambridge, Lynn, Chelsea, Fitchburg, Randolph, Holyoke, Hull, Waltham and Cape Cod. For many of these children, regular oral health care in a dental

setting may be difficult to access due to limited office hours, lack of transportation, or general lack of awareness of the importance of good oral hygiene. ***Amendment #812 funds the Forsyth Kids program at \$300,000, level-funded from FY2018.***

Prescription Drugs:

ACADEMIC DETAILING INITIATIVE • AMENDMENT #557 • SPONSOR: REP. BENSON

Drug companies market their drugs directly to doctors by providing biased information promoting their most expensive drugs. To counter this, trained educators can offer objective information to educate doctors on the cost-effective uses of prescriptions, lowering the cost of health care. ***Amendment #557 adds language and \$500,000 to fund a physician education program on cost-effective ways to manage pain without opioids, administered by the Health Policy Commission.***

BAN DRUG COMPANY MARKETING “COUPONS” • AMENDMENT #1285 • SPONSOR: REP. BARBER

Drug companies use discount “coupons” to entice consumers into purchasing more expensive brand-name drugs, when cheaper and equally-effective alternatives are available. When the coupons run out, patients are left with high copays. Massachusetts banned these coupons, then temporarily authorized them several years ago. The House Ways and Means budget would extend the authorization from 2019 to 2021. ***Amendment #1285 reinstates the state’s prohibition on drug industry marketing “coupons” by 2019.***

MASHEALTH DRUG COST CONTROL AND TRANSPARENCY • AMENDMENT #620 • SPONSOR: REP. JONES

Prescription drug costs are among the fastest growing components of MassHealth spending, yet the state has little negotiating leverage with pharmaceutical manufacturers. This amendment allows MassHealth to negotiate supplemental rebates or agree on fair prices based on the effectiveness of a drug. If the state cannot reach an acceptable agreement, the drug manufacturer must provide justification for the prices being charged. New York successfully pioneered a similar effort, which has slowed drug price growth for their Medicaid program. ***Amendment #620 authorizes MassHealth to negotiate cost-effective drug prices, and receive pricing information if no agreement can be reached.***

Children’s Health (also priorities of the Children’s Mental Health Campaign and the Children’s Health Access Coalition):

INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH • AMENDMENT #247 • SPONSOR: REP. BALSER

Research supports the need for expertise and capacity to assess and treat infant and early childhood mental health needs in a variety of settings, including early childhood education and primary health care. The Department of Mental Health and the Department of Early Education and Care are working collaboratively to better meet the behavioral health needs of young children. Resources will support the inter-agency implementation of infant and early childhood mental health services and supports. ***Amendment #247 would provide \$125,000 to support collaboration activities of the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Early Education and Care.***

MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY PROGRAM FOR KIDS – LOWELL, LYNN AND BOSTON • AMENDMENT #473 • SPONSOR: REP. GOLDEN

The Mental Health Advocacy Program for Kids improves the mental health of vulnerable youth by diverting these children from juvenile detention, inpatient and emergency psychiatric hospitalizations and out of home placements to needed community based treatment and services. MHAP for Kids achieves this goal by embedding an attorney trained in removing barriers to treatment Family Resource Centers in Lowell, Lynn and Boston. A MHAP for Kids attorney works directly with agencies, including schools, treatment providers and insurers to ensure that a child receives appropriate and needed services. ***Amendment #473 would provide \$200,000 to maintain MHAP for Kids.***

EXPANSION OF RETURN TO SCHOOL “BRIDGE” PROGRAMS • AMENDMENT #1172 • SPONSOR: REP. CAMPBELL

Unique to Massachusetts, bridge programs integrate mental health, academic, family, and care coordination supports to address the needs of middle and high school students returning to school following extended health or mental health-related absences. The focus of “bridge programs” is to ensure that youth who have been out of school for psychiatric or other hospitalizations can successfully transition back to school. Half of US high school students with serious mental illness drop out of school. Bridge programs are changing for Massachusetts youth with a short-term intervention that reduces drop-out rates to 8%. ***Amendment #1172 would provide \$250,000 to expand these bridge programs.***

PROTECTING MEDICALLY COMPLEX AND FRAGILE CHILDREN • AMENDMENT #198 • SPONSOR: REP. DWYER

Continuous Skilled Nursing services provide medically necessary, critical care at home to the Commonwealth’s most medically fragile children and adults who would otherwise need to be in a pediatric nursing home or hospital intensive care unit. The highly skilled workforce needed to care for this population has been depleted due to stagnant reimbursement rates over the last decade, resulting in a serious crisis for these families. Additional resources are needed to give families access to highly skilled nurses to provide the medically necessary care that they are authorized to receive. ***Amendment #198 would provide an additional \$16 million investment in the Continuous Skilled Nursing Program.***

PLEASE OPPOSE THESE HARMFUL AMENDMENTS:

MASSHEALTH CONTROL BOARD • AMENDMENTS #116 and #339 • SPONSOR: REPS. LOMBARDO and LYONS

Amendments #116 and #339 set up a MassHealth Control Board with broad authority to make changes to the MassHealth program, with no legislative oversight. The board’s goal is solely to reduce spending, with no consideration of improving the health of the children, seniors and people with disabilities who depend on MassHealth for their health coverage. The section has no provision for participation by MassHealth members or any other consumer voice on this powerful board.

HARMFUL MASSHEALTH PROPOSALS • AMENDMENTS #337 and #338 • SPONSOR: REP. LYONS

Amendment #337 requires that MassHealth spending not exceed 30% of the total state budget. **This would force massive cuts in MassHealth.** Most of the savings would accrue to the federal government, not the state, since the amendment specifies that the cuts would generally affect the MassHealth expansion program, which is 90% funded by the federal government. The savings to the state would be miniscule.

Amendment #338 requires all “able-bodied adults” (not defined) on MassHealth to either be employed, looking for work, or in a job training program. There is no exemption for people attending college, for pregnant women, or people with disabilities in the process of being categorized as disabled. It also bans from coverage people who are eligible for employer health benefits, even if the employer coverage is inadequate. Current MassHealth practice requires some employees to accept their job-related coverage, with MassHealth picking up any benefits not offered by the employer. While most people on MassHealth who can work do, eliminating health coverage will only make people less healthy and less employable as a result.

***Health Care For All promotes health justice in Massachusetts
by working to reduce disparities and ensure coverage and access for all.***

For additional information, please contact Brian Rosman, Director of Policy & Government Relations

at Health Care For All: rosman@hcfama.org or (617) 275-2920.