



uniting consumers to achieve affordable,
high quality health care for all

2008-7

NEWSLETTER November-December, 2008

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Need Your Help with Petitions!

If you have not signed our petition asking elected leadership to Fix Health Care Now!, please go on line and do so.

AND please tell your friends and colleagues to sign. We plan to deliver these petitions to the Governor and Legislative Leadership in mid-January and we need 2500 more signatures! Click on our "Fix It Now!" logo.

www.ohioconsumersforhealth.org



You Can Still Sign Up to Lead a Health Care Discussion Over the Holidays

Senator Tom Daschle, who has just been named Secretary-designate for Health and Human Services (HHS) has invited people across the nation to host house parties to talk about health care.

Sign up to lead a Health Care Community Discussion in your home, community center, or even a local coffee shop, anytime from December 15th to 31st.

They will provide you with a special moderator kit that will give you

Leadership Team Sets OCHC Health Care Reform Priorities

At the November OCHC Leadership Team meeting, health care reform priorities were set for 2009. They include:

Insurance Market Reforms. OCHC supports policies to require insurers to offer coverage to everyone regardless of age or pre-existing conditions, prohibit insurers from selling policies that exclude coverage for a pre-existing condition, and ensure access to affordable comprehensive coverage by narrowing the variation in how much people are charged for insurance.

Transparency and Accountability in Health Care Spending. OCHC will support policies that would require public disclosure by insurers, hospitals, and nursing homes of their revenues and spending and quality measures. We think insurance companies should report how much they spend of premium dollars on health care, administration, and profits.

Increasing Quality and Cost Effectiveness of Care to Improve Outcomes. OCHC will support policies to improve the quality (safety and effectiveness) and affordability of health care to improve health. These include: improving access to continuous, effective, efficient primary care and prevention to keep us healthy and policies to keep the pharmaceutical industry from influencing doctors' prescribing so that consumers get the most safe, effective, affordable medicine.

Shared Responsibility for Health Care Spending.

OCHC will encourage lawmakers to redirect existing spending on health care to maximize effectiveness and to promote paying for expanding health care through policies that seek contributions from hospitals, insurers, providers, employers, and consumers.

OCHC is advocating building blocks, in 2009, as the foundation for winning affordable, high quality health care for all.

everything you need to get the discussion going. And Senator Tom Daschle, the leader of the Transition's Health Policy Team, will even choose some discussions to attend in person. Click here to learn more and sign up.

<http://change.gov/page/s/hcdiscussion>

Upcoming Local OCHC Meetings

Athens -

Tuesday,
January 13, 2009, 6:00-8:00 P.M.

The Plains Library

RSVP margaretdemko@gmail.com

Cincinnati - Tuesday, January 13,
2009, 2:30 - 4:00 P.M.

The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati, 3805 Edwards Road, Ste 500 Cincinnati 45209

RSVP sholmes@uhcanohio.org

Cleveland -- January--

To Be Announced

Contact gbenjamin@uhcanohio.org

Columbus - Thursday,

Thursday, January 22, 2009

RSVP pwhyte@uhcanohio.org

Summit County

Kick off meeting

Thursday, February 5, 2009

6:00 P.M.

Akron Public Library--Downtown

RSVP Yvonne Oliver,

akosuadede@sbcglobal.net

www.ohioconsumersforhealth.org

Join in a Webinar on December 30

President-elect Obama has requested communities to conduct discussions and

provide input into the health care reform effort. This meeting will be focused on racial health care disparities, a topic

How Do the Election Results Impact Health Care Reform Opportunities?

Whether it was the Presidential debates, the Congressional debates, or statehouse candidate forums, healthcare reform was on the mind of Ohioans and the candidates. January will bring change to the White House, Ohio's representation in Congress, and leadership in the Ohio House of Representatives. This change gives us a historic opportunity to capitalize on campaign promises to turn the tide toward better and more affordable healthcare.

Despite the toughest of economic times, the federal leadership changes will likely result in policies that will help states meet their healthcare commitments to their most vulnerable populations. This is not only good for healthcare but an economic stimulus tool as well. With Democrats winning the majority in Ohio's House of Representatives, the political climate may allow for more meaningful debate of healthcare reform and support for the State Coverage Initiative's report to the Governor.

See below what OCHC's Leadership Team experts have to say about the impact of the election.

IMPACT OF THE ELECTION ON PERSONS WITH LOW INCOMES

Col Owens, Legal Aid of Southwest Ohio

The election of Barack Obama as President opens up several new possibilities at the national level for health care. First, it is almost a certainty that a temporary increase in the federal matching share for Medicaid will be included in a second economic stimulus package. This will make it more possible for the state not only to cover the costs of increased Medicaid caseloads due to the severe economic downturn but also to cover the costs of bringing in presently eligible but unenrolled Ohioans- numbering in excess of 250,000 persons, roughly 40% children and 60% adults.

Another benefit of the election is that if President-Elect Obama's health plan as articulated during the campaign poor adults without dependents under the poverty level would become eligible for Medicaid for the first time. This would make eligible for coverage 180,000 childless adults in Ohio.

IMPACT OF THE ELECTIONS ON PERSONS WITH

that can often be overlooked. It is possible to assure ability to pay without

necessarily assuring access to quality care. The discussion will focus on how to assure more than economic access

to quality of care, particularly, how to eliminate racial disparities in health care.

Title: A Health Care Community

Discussion: Health Care Reform and Eliminating Racial Health Care Disparities

Date: Tuesday, December 30, 2008

Time: 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM EST

After registering you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Webinar.

Space is limited.

Reserve your Webinar seat now at:

<https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/568746707>



The on-line dialogue occurred between December 3rd and December 9th. Did you sign on? We would like to hear from you about how it worked. If you participated, please send us an e-mail. Send it to pwhyte@uhcanohio.org

Contact Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage

DISABILITIES

Holly Pendell

National Multiple Sclerosis Society Ohio Chapters

In 2007 in Ohio, Medicaid covered approximately 282,000 persons with disabilities each month. In many cases in Ohio, Medicaid is the only program for chronic and long-term care for people with disabilities, including people with mental illness due to the lack of affordable healthcare options for persons with pre-existing conditions. Ohio, like many states, faces major cuts this budget year. These cuts could result in discussions around lowering Medicaid eligibility and increasing the number of Ohioans without access to health care. Additionally, Medicaid programs that impact persons with disabilities like the Medicaid Buy In for Workers with Disabilities could be affected.

If the federal stimulus bill, Senate Bill 3689, were enacted as drafted during the lame-duck Congress, there would be an 8 percent temporary increase in the FMAP, an increase of almost \$38 billion over the next 15 months. It is estimated that the increase would bring an addition \$900 million to Ohio and go a long way in protecting current eligibility standards to Ohio's Medicaid program.

IMPACT ON OLDER ADULTS

Ron Bridges, AARP

The election results may make it easier to advance some of the issues of older adults in Congress, but it will also depend on the economic crisis and other competing issues on the Hill, such as energy. It will be important to show how health care is also an economic issue. Changes in committee ratios and members will also be a factor in advancing our agenda.

Despite difficult times with enormous challenges, especially with regard to health and financial security, the recent election marks the beginning of a new era in Washington. With a mandate for change, President-elect Obama has an extraordinary opportunity to change America for a generation and beyond. As the Obama Administration transitions into the White House, and the new Congress convenes, we will be there to ensure that the lifetime economic security and health care needs of all Americans are being dealt with in a fair and appropriate manner.

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Co-Chair OCHC

Col Owens

Senior Staff Attorney

Legal Aid of SW Ohio

Co-Chair of OCHC

IMPACT ON PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Betsy Johnson

National Alliance on Mental Illness Ohio

At the state level, mental health advocates in Ohio are gearing up for a difficult budget. Their message to lawmakers will focus on the importance of adequate funding for mental health services, the need to ensure open access to mental health medications, and equal access to health care coverage. Unfortunately, two of the biggest mental health advocates from the 127th General Assembly will not be returning next year, Rep. Jon Peterson and Senator Bob Spada. This loss will certainly be felt. At the same time, Marian Harris, a mental health advocate herself, has been elected to the 19th House District in Central Ohio. Advocates are also pleased that Rep. Ted Celeste, sponsor of the comprehensive mental health and addiction parity bill, will be returning next year. With the Democrats in control of the House, it may mean that there will be movement on his parity bill, which will bring Ohio law closer in line with the new federal parity law by requiring insurance plans for smaller employers to cover all mental health and alcohol and drug addiction disorders, rather than just the seven biological brain disorders covered under current law.