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“The Cost of Inaction Is Too High” Say Organizations, Individuals Committed to Health Care Reform in Pennsylvania

Campaign will push for passage of “Prescription for PA”

PHILADELPHIA – Today, leaders from across Pennsylvania announced the formation of “Pennsylvanians United for Affordable Health Care”, a non-profit coalition of individuals and groups dedicated to supporting the “Prescription for Pennsylvania” and working with elected officials and members of our communities to get it enacted. The Coalition also announced the launch of a website designed to build public support for the plan www.InsurePaNow.org.

On January 17, 2007, Governor Edward G. Rendell proposed the “Prescription for Pennsylvania”, a comprehensive plan that will expand the access to affordable quality health care for every Pennsylvanian. The “Prescription for Pennsylvania” focuses on lowering costs, improving quality, and expanding coverage. The plan will:

- **Lower Costs:** The “Prescription for Pennsylvania” will reduce the \$7.6 billion wasted annually on avoidable medical costs – costs passed onto employers and individuals – and make insurance more affordable for every employer and individual.
- **Improve Quality:** Improving the quality of care patients receive and increasing preventative care will not only lower the overall cost of care, it will dramatically increase the quality of life of every Pennsylvanian.
- **Expand Coverage:** The “Prescription for Pennsylvania” allows small businesses and individuals to purchase lower cost coverage through “Cover All Pennsylvanians”. Some individuals will be eligible to have their costs subsidized or eliminated. The plan also increases access to needed health care services.

The coalition members come from every corner of the commonwealth and from every walk of life, united in the belief that for Pennsylvania to move forward, there needs to be fundamental reform to our health care system. It’s not something we “should” do. It’s something we “must” do. The cost of inaction is simply too high.

Original members of the Coalition announced their support for the “Prescription for Pennsylvania”.

“Voters sent a clear message in November that they want Harrisburg to put aside partisan politics and get to work on the issues that matter to Pennsylvania families,” said Thomas V. De Bruin, President of SEIU 1199P, Pennsylvania’s largest health care workers’ union. “No issue is more critical than replacing our broken healthcare system with one that provides affordable, high quality care to everyone. If Washington won’t do it, we must.”

“By focusing on improving the quality of care and expanding the role of nurses in providing care, this proposal does something no one else is doing: making our health care system better as it lowers its costs,” said Betsy M. Snook, the Executive Administrator of the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association. “Nurses know first hand how important this is and that’s why we are proud to stand with the Governor to help pass ‘The Prescription for Pennsylvania’.”

“Every day, teachers see first hand the impact being unable to afford health insurance has on families and children,” added Ted Kirsch, the president of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. “With this proposal and last year’s ‘Cover All Kids’, every family will be able to get the care that they need. We need reform now. We can not wait any longer.”

“Every year, it becomes harder for working families to afford the health insurance they need, especially those who work at multiple part time jobs to make ends meet,” said Wendell W. Young IV, the president of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1776. “With the ‘Prescription for Pennsylvania’, the Governor has started a process long over due of fundamentally reforming our health care system.”

“People need the security to know that if they lose their job, they can still have health insurance,” said John Dodds, the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Unemployment Project (PUP). “We see this as an historic opportunity to guarantee that all Pennsylvanians have access to decent health coverage.”

“For years, people have been debating pieces of the solution to our health care crisis -- how best to expand the access to affordable care or how to improve its quality,” said Henry Nicholas, president of 1199C of the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees. “But by proposing a comprehensive plan, the Governor has taken a giant step forward to solving the problem. We should not waste this opportunity.”

Members of the new coalition pointed to last year’s effort to increase Pennsylvania’s minimum wage, which had not been raised by the Federal Government in more than nine years, as an example of what can be achieved by committed community leaders. Despite staunch opposition by many well-funded special interest groups, a coalition of organizations and individuals from across the Commonwealth launched an aggressive and sophisticated public education and advocacy campaign that led to its passage.

The Coalition plans to build on the lessons learned in that effort as it works to ensure passage of the “Prescription for Pennsylvania.” Through its outreach strategies, the Coalition will continue to add new members and grow its numbers as the campaign progresses.

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