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June 18, 2015

New Hampshire Op-Ed

Now is the Right Time.

Reauthorize the Health Protection Program and Restore Primary Care Funding.



The health and wellness of more than 40,000 people throughout our great state will be negatively affected if the New Hampshire Health Protection Program is not reauthorized by the Legislature. Now is the right time for our elected officials to work together to include continued funding in this budget to provide access to health care for people whose income is \$15,000 a year or less.

The Health Protection Program was designed with thoughtful bipartisan negotiations, cooperation, and concessions to create a New Hampshire solution to our state's health crisis. Beyond this remarkable consensus, this program is unanimously supported by the health care provider community and the business community, including the Business and Industry Association. The Health Protection Program provides health insurance coverage and income security through a cost-effective option. The insurance coverage has tremendous value, including access to preventive and primary care, mental health and behavioral health care and access to specialty and hospital care. The Health Protection Program increases quality of life and reduces the burden of illness, it bridges patients into our managed care system, and reduces the financial burden of uncompensated care and the subsequent drain on businesses and individuals.

Federal funding makes it possible for New Hampshire to extend private health insurance coverage to low-income residents. The federal resources provide tremendous economic support for our health care infrastructure. These resources will reduce near- and long-term health care costs borne by the individual, the providers, the state, and the taxpayers.

The state also funds primary and preventive care services through a partnership with New Hampshire's 15 Community Health Centers. Now is the right time for our elected officials to restore this funding in the budget. Taxpayers benefit when people are treated in the primary care setting because it is the most cost-effective setting in which to receive care. The Health Centers provide a full range of primary and preventive health care services including medical, oral, behavioral, and substance use disorder care; Health Center pharmacies, and referrals to specialty or hospital care. The Health Centers are nationally accredited Patient-Centered Medical Homes that reduce barriers to care by providing enabling services such as care coordination and case management, translation services, mobile health units and transportation, education on health and disease management, and engage their patients in caring for themselves. These support services are critical to patients and their families. A \$2 million reduction in services will decrease access to these important services in medically underserved areas throughout our state.

Reauthorizing New Hampshire's Health Protection Program is the right thing to do. Restoring the reduction in primary care funding is the right thing to do. Now is the right time for our elected officials to work together to ensure coverage and access to primary and preventive care to help people stay well, reduce the overall burden of chronic disease, and save our communities and the state money.

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