

Health Care For All 2021-2022 Legislative Priorities

Make Health Care More Affordable (HB1247/SB782, Representative Barber and Senator Keenan): Health care is too expensive. Individuals and families are being asked to pay more than their fair share with co-pays, deductibles and premiums increasing every year. *The More Affordable Care Act (MAC)* would make certain medications and treatments for several chronic conditions that disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income communities free of charge. The MAC Act would also create a program to lower premiums for individuals and small businesses, as well as promote transparency for insurance cost increases.

Require Hospital Cost Transparency (SB783, Senator Keenan): Lowering health care costs for consumers in the long run requires addressing not just premiums and co-pays, but a major underlying driver of these costs - hospital expenses. Currently, there is little transparency when it comes to costs for the state's most expensive hospitals. *The Transparency for High-Cost Hospitals Act* would require more transparency about how much hospitals contribute to the costs faced by individuals and families.

Improve Prescription Drug Affordability (HB729/SB771, Representatives Barber and Santiago and Senator Friedman): Prescription drug prices continue to rise, increasing the cost of health insurance and making it harder for individuals and families to afford the medications they need. *An Act to ensure prescription drug cost transparency and affordability* (HB729) and *An Act relative to pharmaceutical access, cost and transparency* (SB771) would allow the Health Policy Commission (HPC) to conduct affordability reviews of certain prescription drugs and engage drug manufacturers in improving affordability if prices are deemed unreasonable or excessive. The bills would also create patient assistance programs to make certain chronic disease medications more affordable.

Ensure Safe and Timely Access to Care (HB1200/SB637, Representative Santiago and Senator Comerford): Health plans routinely require patients to obtain prior authorization (pre-approval) for certain health services or medications to control costs and oversee coverage decisions. Obtaining prior authorizations can be difficult for patients and providers due to the different forms and processes each health plan uses. *An Act to improve the health insurance prior authorization process* would help ensure timely, safe and affordable access to evidence-based care by prohibiting plans from modifying or rescinding approved prior authorizations, improving transparency and communication to providers and consumers about prior authorization policies, and creating a commission to review and simplify the prior authorization process across plans.

Extend Postpartum Coverage for Birthing People (HB1297/SB799, Representative Miranda and Senator Lovely): Maternal mortality and morbidity are growing health crises in the United States, especially for Black, Indigenous and People of Color. However, people eligible for MassHealth based on pregnancy lose this coverage after just 60 days postpartum, limiting access to key services such as care and support for pregnancy-related complications, chronic disease, mental health and substance use disorders. *An Act expanding equitable access to postpartum care* would extend coverage to 12 months postpartum, ensuring continuous coverage during a critical time.

Improve Access to Care for Immigrant Children (HB1309/SB762 & HB1310/SB763, Representative Rogers and Senator DiDomenico): Over 30,000 low-income children and young adults can only access health programs with very limited benefits. Immigration status is the only factor preventing them from qualifying for comprehensive MassHealth coverage. *An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children* (HB1309/SB762) expands comprehensive MassHealth coverage to all young people under age 21 whose only barrier to eligibility is immigration status. *An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities* (HB1310/SB763) is a more limited version of the legislation that would expand Commonwealth coverage only to immigrant children and young adults with disabilities.

Understand the Oral Health Challenges of Massachusetts Residents (HB2320/SB1378, Representative Hogan and Senator Chandler): Dental care is a critical component of overall health care, yet access to dental coverage and services is out of reach for many Massachusetts residents. Currently, data on oral health needs and access to care is extremely outdated, hindering policymakers' ability to create policy solutions. *An Act Establishing an Oral Health Commission and Needs Assessment* is an important step to acquire an accurate picture of the oral health needs of residents across the state and address racial, linguistic and geographic disparities in access to oral health care.

**For more information, please contact Alyssa Vangeli at Health Care For All:
avangeli@hcfama.org or 617-275-2922**