

## Health Care For All 2021-2022 Legislative Priorities

### **Make Health Care More Affordable** (H.1247/S.782, Rep. Barber and Sen. 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** (S.783, Sen. 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** (S.771, Sen. Friedman)

*H.729, sponsored by Reps. Barber and Santiago, was attached to S.771 with the favorable report to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.*

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 relative to pharmaceutical access, cost and transparency* allows 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 bill would also create patient assistance programs to make certain chronic disease medications more affordable.

### **Ensure Safe and Timely Access to Care** (H.1200/S.637, Rep. Santiago and Sen. 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* helps 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** (S.2583, Sen. Lovely)

*The House companion bill, H.1297, sponsored by Rep. Miranda, was attached to S.799 and amended as S.2583 with the favorable report to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.*

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* extends coverage to 12 months postpartum, ensuring continuous coverage during a critical time.

**Improve Access to Care for Immigrant Children** (S.762, Sen. DiDomenico): *The House companion bill, H.1309, sponsored by Rep. Dave Rogers, was attached to S.762 with the favorable report to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.*

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. This bill expands comprehensive MassHealth coverage to all young people under age 21 who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements, regardless of immigration status. Seven states and Washington DC have enacted similar policies over the years.

**Understand the Oral Health Challenges of Massachusetts Residents** (H.2320/S.1378, Rep. Hogan and Sen. 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.

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