



ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Committed To Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978

ALPHA RESOLUTION 1-2007

Support for Insurance Coverage Expansion in Alaska

Sponsors: Alaska Health Assurance Advocacy Team (AHAAT)
AHAAT Co-Chair Kip Knudson, Legislative Affairs Chair, Alaska State Chamber of Commerce
AHAAT Co-Chair Shelley Hughes, Government Affairs Director, Alaska Primary Care Association
AHAAT Vice Chair Pat Luby, Advocacy Director, AARP-Alaska

WHEREAS the Alaska Public Health Association strives toward the goal of a statewide healthy population, and because the provision of health insurance is a key component of that; and

WHEREAS access to health insurance, along with personal and environmental prevention, high quality health care, and real access for both the insured and the uninsured, are ongoing priorities of public health professionals and public health advocates; and

WHEREAS access to health insurance is a pivotal priority that must be realized in order for these other health care priorities to be met for the purpose of achieving better public health and better overall health outcomes in Alaska; and

WHEREAS 114,000 Alaskans or 17% of the population are uninsured;¹ and

WHEREAS 18,000 of those uninsured are children;² and

WHEREAS 33,623 Alaskan children lack continuous insurance coverage throughout the year;³ and

WHEREAS Alaska has seen a 31% decline in the number of children covered by private health insurance in the past decade;⁴ and

¹State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives

² Ibid

³State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives pg 13 (Source: National Child Health Survey 2003)

⁴ Legislative Health Care Initiatives Presentation to the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, August 27, 2007



ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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WHEREAS uninsured children are 9 times less likely to have a regular doctor and 4 times more likely to be taken to emergency rooms;⁵ and

WHEREAS uninsured children are 25% more likely to miss school than insured children;⁶ and

WHEREAS 20% of Alaska baby boomers are uninsured;⁷ and

WHEREAS 52% of the uninsured in Alaska are employed⁸; and

WHEREAS 84% of the uninsured in Alaska are from working families as compared to the U.S. rate of 78%.⁹; and

WHEREAS less than half (42 %) of private sector employees in Alaska have work-based insurance and 58% of private sector employees lack coverage;¹⁰ and

WHEREAS only 52 % of all Alaskans, as reported by the Current Population Survey, are covered through employment-based insurance;¹¹ and

WHEREAS the National Medical Expenditure Panel Survey reported that in 2004 less than 1/4 of Alaskan firms with fewer than 10 employees offered health insurance;¹² and

WHEREAS the 2006 Alaska Employer Survey reports 53% of firms cited 'too expensive' as the reason for not offering health insurance;¹³ and

⁵ Legislative Health Care Initiatives Presentation to the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, August 27, 2007

⁶ Ibid

⁷ AHAAT Meeting Summary Oct. 17, 07 (Info from AARP)

⁸ State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives

⁹ Email Communication by Alice Rarig, Ph.D., State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development to Shelley Hughes, Alaska Primary Care Association, Oct. 16, 2007

¹⁰ State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives

¹¹ State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives pg 20 (Source: CPS)

¹² State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives pg 21 (Source: MEPS 2004)

¹³ State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives pg 22 (Source: Alaska Employer Survey 2006)



ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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WHEREAS seasonal employees have difficulties obtaining and retaining health coverage because many employers do not offer insurance to seasonal employees; seasonal employees often lack sufficient work tenure to qualify for insurance; seasonal employees who are covered usually lose employment-based insurance when the work season ends;¹⁴ and

WHEREAS Alaska has many populations and characteristics including, but not limited to, a high number of seasonal workers, a high number of self-employed individuals, a large number of small businesses, a large number of high risk occupations¹⁵; and

WHEREAS competition for insurance and health care choices is limited because of Alaska's small population;¹⁶ and

WHEREAS lack of coverage results in higher health risks because the uninsured receive less preventive care; illnesses are diagnosed at later stages; and the uninsured have a greater likelihood of developing chronic conditions that are difficult and expensive to treat;¹⁷ and

WHEREAS health insurance contributes to the overall wellness of individuals and families by providing access to health care (doctor visits, preventive care, diagnostics, maintenance, medications);¹⁸ and

WHEREAS health insurance coverage which promotes access to primary care contributes to the overall health, wellness, and economic stability of communities due to a healthier and more productive workforce (lower rates of illness-related absences), reduced childhood diseases, increased educational attainment, increased retirement savings, increased local and outside investments in community projects, and increased community cohesion and development¹⁹; and

WHEREAS health insurance contributes to the economic development of communities by helping small businesses employers attract and retain employees;²⁰ and

¹⁴ State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives pg 25

¹⁵ State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives

¹⁶ AHAAT Meeting Summary August 13, 2007

¹⁷ Legislative Health Care Initiatives Presentation to the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, August 27, 2007

¹⁸ State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives

¹⁹ Macroeconomics and Health: Investing in Health for Economic Development, 2001, The Commission on Macroeconomics and World Health Organization

²⁰ State of Alaska, DHSS, Health Planning & Systems Development, State Planning Grant Power Point Presentation: Alaskans' Health Insurance Coverage, July 17, 2007: Local and Regional Perspectives



ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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WHEREAS in 2005, the total cost of health care in Alaska for the uninsured was estimated to be \$125 million (this excludes costs paid out-of-pocket by the uninsured);²¹ and

WHEREAS the cost of caring for the uninsured are passed on to other Alaskans, businesses and governments, raising premiums and out-of-pocket expenses for everyone;²² and

WHEREAS health care spending in Alaska is increasing rapidly. In 1991, about \$1.6 billion was spent; in 2005, spending exceeded \$5 billion. This is an increase of 176% per Alaskan in 15 years;²³

WHEREAS advocacy efforts by the Alaska Public Health Association would include low or no-cost, high impact strategies to encourage policy changes to promote access to affordable and portable insurance coverage that includes appropriate, high-quality, and cost-effective care and that is based on shared responsibilities between individuals and the public and private sectors; and

WHEREAS the aforementioned policy change efforts would result in improved public health and overall health outcomes throughout the state for Alaskans;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Alaska Public Health Association will promote and advocate for state and federal healthcare policies that meet the following objectives:

- Ensure polices regarding insurance coverage align with the 4 A's of Access to Healthcare: Availability, Affordability, Administrative Simplicity, and Adequacy
- Increase the health care workforce to a sufficient level based on population and need to ensure that adequate access to quality care will be available to the newly insured as well as the existing insured
- Reduce the number of uninsured Alaskans, including Alaska Natives in remote/frontier villages that have no road access to the rest of the state
- Reduce the number of uninsured working young, working low-income, small business employees, and students in Alaska
- Reduce the number of uninsured seasonal workers in Alaska, which has an unusually high proportion compared to other states
- Reduce the number of uninsured disabled people in Alaska, which has an unusually high rate of dangerous occupations

²¹ Legislative Health Care Initiatives Presentation to the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, August 27, 2007

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid



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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association as an organization as well as individual Board Members and other Members will engage in low and no-cost advocacy efforts to promote insurance coverage expansion such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Circulation of advocacy action requests to membership
- Circulation of advocacy action requests to partners and other individuals
- Posting of ALPHA resolutions on the Alaska Public Health Association's website and/or making this resolution available
- Participation in email advocacy campaigns
- Contact with policy makers via phone, letter, email and/or in-person meetings
- Public testimony in legislative hearings, town hall meetings, and other public forums
- Contribution of op-ed articles and/or letters to the editor
- Contributions to radio programs via calling-in or scheduled interviews
- Distribution of this resolution statement to policy makers and key officials

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall be the position of the Alaska Public Health Association until it is withdrawn or modified by a subsequent resolution.

Adopted by vote of the ALPHA general membership on the 3rd day of December, 2007.

Fiscal & Public Health Statement: This resolution is being submitted for consideration by the Alaska Public Health Association. This action will result in minor costs associated with sending this resolution and accompanying cover letter to the Governor and key political leaders. There are several items contained in the resolution that deal with the problem of Alaska's un- and underinsured. The organizations participating in AHAAT believe passage and support of this resolution by the Alaska Public Health Association would be very helpful in working to resolve the issue of the uninsured and underinsured in our state which has a significant impact on all citizens and the health care delivery system.