

Coordinating health & health care  
for a thriving Kansas



March 27, 2008

Early next week, legislators from the Kansas Senate and House of Representatives are expected to meet in Conference Committee to make a pivotal decision about health reform in our state. Active discussion about health reform in Kansas started in November last year with the release of the 21 health reform recommendations developed by the Kansas Health Policy Authority. Those recommendations were the result of conversations with hundreds of health care consumers, advocates, and providers across Kansas and were designed to transform the Kansas health system, lower health care costs, and make Kansas a healthier state.

During this session, health reform was debated in the legislature and a thoughtful compromise bill emerged from the Kansas House of Representatives, resulting in House substitute for Senate Bill 81. The compromise encompassed many of the KHPA's original 21 recommendations. Last week, bipartisan leadership in the House played an important role in advancing the compromise health reform bill. Action next week in Conference Committee could result in meaningful Kansas health reform if the House compromise provisions are included in the final bill.

Important elements of the House health reform bill that will be debated next week include:

- Providing first year funding for Premium Assistance, a new private health insurance program for very low income Kansans;
- Expanding opportunities for employees and employers to take advantage of Section 125 plans, which allow employees to purchase health insurance with pre-tax dollars;
- Expanding cancer screenings and providing dental coverage and tobacco cessation assistance for pregnant women;
- Expanding Medicaid to pregnant women from 150% of the Federal Poverty Level to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$35,200 for a family of 3);
- Increasing coordination of health care through statewide community health records and establishing "medical homes" for Kansans.

Next week's Conference Committee will be a defining moment for true Kansas Health Reform. Please contact your legislator in the coming days to express your opinion about this issue.

Sincerely,

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