

08.06.12 Health Care Bill Signing

AS DELIVERED

Governor Deval L. Patrick

Health Care Cost Containment Bill Signing

Monday, August 6, 2012

Nurse's Hall, The State House

In this Commonwealth, we believe that health is a public good, an expression of the kind of community we want to live in. Through the years, this central value has motivated a broad coalition of medical, business and labor leaders, caregivers and patient advocates, legislators and policy makers -- many of whom stand with us today -- to rethink and reshape our health care system in order to make quality, affordable care a reality for everyone.

By any measure, our progress has been impressive.

Today, over 98% of our residents are insured. 99.8% of children. No other state in America can touch that.

Over 90% of our residents have a primary care physician, and 4 out of 5 have seen their doctor in the last 12 months.

More businesses offer health insurance to their employees today than before our reforms took effect -- some 78% of Massachusetts businesses as compared to the national average of about 69%.

We are healthier, too. Preventive care is up: more people are receiving cancer screenings, more women are getting pre-natal care, and non-emergency visits to emergency rooms have decreased.

We've made progress containing cost in the last few years as well.

Average annual increases in health insurance rates have dropped from over 16% to less than 1% in the last two years, saving small businesses and working families over \$600 hundred million.

The Health Connector has reduced premiums by 10% in the past two years without sacrificing the scale or quality of coverage.

Providers and insurers have reopened contracts and reduced preset increases, cutting millions out of future cost growth.

Small businesses can now band together into health insurance cooperatives to improve their buying power, and limited network and tiered plans are now available on the market at up to 12% less than ordinary rates; and those discounts improve with this new legislation.

Because of a robust collaboration between government and the private sector, there is a tremendous level of innovation in the Massachusetts market today, driving toward lower costs. And it's being noticed nationally: of the 32 newly-created organizations in the United States pioneering cost-saving partnerships under the Affordable Care Act, 5 of them are here in Massachusetts. Again, no other state quite like us.

Today, we take our next big step forward. And like the ones before this one, we take it together. The bill I am about to sign makes the link many have long recognized between better health and lower costs, that we need a real health care system in place of the sick care system that we have today. What we're really doing is moving towards a focus on health outcomes, and a system to reward that. We are ushering in the end of the fee-for-service care in Massachusetts in favor of better care at lower cost.

Through a series of tools ranging from enabling new care delivery models to capping the rate of overall cost growth to medical malpractice reform, this bill will result in nearly \$200 billion in health care cost savings over the next 15 years.

Massachusetts has been a model to the nation for access to health care. Today we become the first to crack the code on cost.

And importantly, we have come this far together.

I want to start by thanking Chairman Steve Walsh and Senator Dick Moore, and their staff, for the seriousness of purpose, thoughtfulness and flexibility that they each brought to this work. David Seltz of the Senate President's office deserves special mention for his consistent creativity.

From the start, Secretary Jay Gonzalez and Secretary JudyAnn Bigby showed exceptional leadership on this legislation and the thinking behind it. We would not have a bill this good without each of them. I want to also acknowledge Secretary Greg Bialecki and his team for their work on behalf of consumers and small businesses throughout this process.

The Attorney General stepped up and was critical to getting this bill over the finish line. Her enforcement role going forward will also be critical.

The Speaker and the Senate President pledged to get me a bill I could sign before the end of the Session. And while I did not think that would mean the very end of the Session, there was little nail biting on my part because they brought us in and made my team a part of their team in working through the toughest issues. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the Senate President for your leadership and all the members for their votes.

And finally, I thank this coalition of leaders and advocates, of disparate and sometimes competing interests, for coming together and sticking together for the greater good. That's not only what it has taken and will take to lower health care costs. That's what it takes to make a real community -- and it's one of which I am proud to be a part.

Congratulations, one and all.