

Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved 2006 Legislative Agenda

CCMU focused its resources on three priority issues during the 2006 legislative session.

Referendum C and Health Care Funding

CCMU took on the role of watchdog over the legislature's decisions about Referendum C health care funding. Our goal was to assure the amount and purpose of health care funding reflected the voter's will. CCMU supported the majority of decisions, with funding cuts in mental health, developmental disabilities, and local public health largely restored. CCMU continues to voice concerns about one of the Referendum C health care decisions to fund capital construction for the Colorado Mental Health Institute's forensics unit in Pueblo.

CCMU also supported SB44, which uses some of the Referendum C health care funds for the Colorado Indigent Care Program (CICP), providing support to safety net clinics who serve low-income, uninsured patients. Sponsored by Senator Hagedorn (D-Aurora) and Representative Green (D-Golden), SB44 allocates \$15 million to primary care clinics to provide health care to uninsured adults. The bill also expands eligibility in the CICP program up to 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) from 200% currently.

Small Business Standard and Basic Health Plans to Continue with a New Feature

CCMU took a leadership role on SB36, a bill to continue the standard and basic health plans for small businesses. The bill passed after a conference committee on the final day of the session. Sponsored by Senator Hagedorn (D-Aurora) and Representative Marshall (D-Denver), SB36 will assure small businesses with 1 to 50 employees can continue to have a guaranteed issue health insurance plan. The current standard plan and the three basic plans options from which carriers must choose at least one plan will continue. However, insurance carriers will be able to choose from an additional basic plan, which will be effective January 1, 2008. The fourth basic plan option will be based on the latest medical evidence, and is anticipated to be a low cost product. CCMU hopes it will result in more affordable coverage, leading to coverage of more small business employees. The new plan will be designed by an Advisory Committee appointed by the Insurance Commissioner to be convened starting this fall.

Health Care Reform Commission

CCMU worked hard to assure passage of SB208, proving instrumental in the final Senate vote to concur with the House changes. SB208 underwent several changes from completely new Senate and House sponsors to a "strike below" amendment that gutted the original bill, replacing it with a completely new bill. Senator Shaffer (D-Longmont) took it over from Senator Hanna when she resigned from the Senate and Representatives Anne McGihon (D-Denver) and Tom Massey (R-Poncha Springs) took the lead on changing the bill once it arrived in the House.

As passed, SB208 creates a Blue Ribbon Commission for Health Care Reform consisting of 24 members, including 8 consumers, 8 purchasers, and 8 business leaders or experts. The Commission is charged with examining other state's models for comprehensive health care reform, hiring technical consultants to complete detailed technical analysis of 3 – 5 models for Colorado, holding public input meetings around the state, and preparing a written report with recommendations by November 1, 2007. CCMU will be submitting recommended candidates for the Commission.