

## HEALTH CARE

The Partnership recognizes that overall health and wellness for consumers is crucial for our society and business climate. As such, The Partnership endorses a health care agenda that supports health care providers, educators and organizations that comprise a large and important part of Central Iowa's economy. The Partnership strives to support the entire region with a health care agenda and this presents additional challenges, including financial and access issues to those in more rural settings. In addition, The Partnership further recognizes the ever-increasing cost of health care for businesses and supports efforts to reduce the overall cost while maintaining a strong and vibrant health care system that meets the needs of employees and consumers.

### HEALTH CARE REFORM

Following the 2016 elections, federal health care policy is shifting dramatically, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) hangs in the balance. Congress and the Administration are considering how to create a viable and functional health insurance market where individuals can buy affordable insurance that meets the needs of the household. As Congress tackles these complex issues, The Partnership believes that sound health care policy that offers affordable options must be based on several principles:

- Some of the consumer protections in the ACA should be retained, including prohibitions on preexisting condition exclusions, no annual or lifetime dollar limits on coverage and allowing young adults to stay on parents' health plans until age 26.
- Individuals who have and like pre-ACA coverage, known as grandfathered and grandmothered plans, can keep it.
- A stable and broad insurance pool is essential for the long-term viability of the health insurance market. Congress and the Administration must adopt strong incentives for continuous coverage so that people do not buy health insurance only when there is an illness.
- The government must provide a reasonable level of premium assistance for people who cannot afford health care. Premium assistance and insurance rating rules must be designed to ensure that young and healthy people participate in the insurance market.

- Because the costs for serious medical conditions are growing rapidly, a relatively small number of severely sick people significantly drive up premium costs for everyone. Programs such as high-risk pools or reinsurance help address these catastrophic costs and lower premiums.
- States should return to the traditional role of being the primary regulators of the health insurance market.
- Health plans need increased flexibility to innovate and design plans that people want and can afford, subject to state legislatures and regulators ensuring that vital services are covered.

### **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

The Partnership supports efforts to make high-quality mental and behavioral health services more accessible in the community. Congress should support legislation to expand programs and funding for these services, especially those that are community-based, to ensure access to coordinated, holistic care. The Partnership supports legislative action to improve mental health services and ensure parity within the Medicaid and Medicare programs by enacting critical reforms to allow for same-day and same-location mental health and primary care services and to repeal the current Medicaid exclusion on inpatient psychiatric care for certain individuals. Further, The Partnership supports efforts to strengthen mental health parity and provide incentives to states to help integrate mental and physical health services.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH INITIATIVES**

The Partnership supports the following public health initiatives:

- Increased funding of public health initiatives proposed by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for Zika virus outbreak management, mosquito control programs, vaccine research, education and improving health care for low-income pregnant women.
- The establishment of a free immunization program for uninsured adults, along the lines of CDC's Vaccine for Children Program.
- Increased funding for Safe Routes to Schools.
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## **HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE**

The Partnership supports continued funding for federal programs supporting Graduate Medical Education (GME), including both Direct GME and Indirect Medical Education payments. The Partnership further supports resources to be made available to allow Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to consider exceptions for funding GME positions beyond the cap in areas with demonstrable physician shortages for particular specialties, e.g. Psychiatry, Primary Care Specialties, OB/GYN and General Surgery.

## **MEDICAID**

Medicaid expansion has provided thousands of lower income Iowans with access to health care. Congress should carefully consider changes to the Medicaid program to make sure that low-income persons continue to receive coverage.

## **MEDICARE**

The Partnership supports improving fairness and equity in Medicare payments between geographical areas and supports the implementation of new reimbursement models such as the shared savings program, that reward quality and efficiency, not quantity of services. Specifically, The Partnership supports eliminating the inaccuracies and inequities in the Geographic Practice Cost Index (GPCI) geographic adjusters to Medicare payment for physicians and using contemporary market or actual cost data for physicians.

## **AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**

The Partnership urges Congress to explore several options to address the continued rapid rise in drug costs. Iowans with high drug costs must sometimes choose between necessary drugs or food, or purchasing drugs from other countries.

## **PALLIATIVE CARE AND HOSPICE EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACT**

The Partnership supports expanding access to palliative care. Palliative care is specialized medical care that improves quality of life for patients and families by focusing on relief from pain, stress and other symptoms of treatment for serious diseases. It is appropriate at any age and any stage and can be provided alongside curative treatment. It is delivered by trained specialists who work together with doctors and nurses in a team-based approach that focuses on the patients' needs, explains treatment options and gives patients and families a voice in realizing treatment goals. However, awareness of and access to palliative care services remains a significant

barrier for many Iowans. The Partnership supports the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA), as it aims to put a needed spotlight on palliative care by:

- Developing an educational campaign for the public and health care providers.
- Establishing palliative care workforce training programs for doctors, nurses and other health professionals.
- Enhancing research in palliative care.