

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **MINNESOTA LEADERS PROPOSE BILL REQUIRING INSURANCE FOR ALL**

MINNEAPOLIS - Healthy Minnesota: A Partnership for Reform, today introduced a sweeping vision for health care reform in Minnesota and specific legislation for 2007. The Healthy Minnesota Partnership is a broad-based, ad hoc coalition of legislators, educators, physicians, and executive leaders of health plans, hospitals, clinics and consumer groups.

Their plan envisions health care insurance for all Minnesotans, more affordable care and coverage, better health status, greater value, strong patient-clinician relationships and adequate, stable funding.

To move toward these goals, the group is introducing legislation during the 2007 session that would achieve their vision by 2011.

The 2007 Healthy Minnesota bill would require every Minnesotan to have health insurance and make a clear commitment to achieving universal coverage.

“People without insurance often don’t get the preventive care they need and so may develop serious illness and end up in the emergency room,” said Donald Jacobs, M.D., chair of the Healthy Minnesota Partnership, a physician at Hennepin County Medical Center, CEO of Hennepin Faculty Associates, and member of the Minnesota Medical Association Board of Trustees. “If everyone is insured, we can keep people healthier, give better care and spend our health care dollars more wisely.”

“Universal coverage is an achievable goal,” said Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon, DFL-Duluth. “With only 7 percent of citizens uninsured, Minnesota has one of the lowest rates of uninsurance in the nation. We’re starting from strength.”

Universal coverage is not possible without a requirement that everyone have insurance coverage and subsidies for those who can’t afford it. With a workable insurance requirement in place, the bill then requires insurers to offer the basic health plan to anyone who applies. It would also create an insurance portal to help people buy insurance.

“This bill requires people to take responsibility for their own health but at the same time it gives them the security of knowing assistance is available if they can’t afford health insurance,” said Rep. Thomas Huntley, DFL-Duluth.

The bill also calls for pilot projects for “medical homes” that would coordinate care for individuals, and link patients to specialty care and support services through their primary care physician or clinic. Time and money would be invested in prevention, health education and chronic disease management. Wasteful duplication and gaps in care would be reduced or eliminated. The pilot projects will test whether this approach will save money and improve care. Partnership members believe it will.

“Today’s payment system rewards treatment of acute illness. It doesn’t really allow providers to spend much time with their patients. We believe that by creating medical homes we’ll move toward incentives to keep people healthy,” said Jan Malcolm, CEO of Courage Center. “This is especially important for people with chronic illness. In a medical home, care comes together and all the patient’s medical needs are met.”

Other provisions in the bill would provide funding to ensure that our public health system keeps Minnesotans healthy now and in the future; to help improve care in rural underserved areas, and to encourage city and community planning that fosters active healthy lifestyles. The bill would also require at least 20 minutes of physical activity in school.

“This legislation is just the first step,” said Jacobs. “We still have much work to do to address the problems in our complex health care system. More significant cost containment and fundamental market reforms are needed to create long-term affordability and value for our health care dollars, but this bill starts us on the road toward health care reform.”

Members of the partnership joining together to propose the 2007 legislation are:

Mark W. Banks, M.D., CEO, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Mary Brainerd, president and CEO, HealthPartners

Frank Cerra, M.D., senior vice president for health sciences, University of Minnesota

Sen. Steve Dille (R-Dassel)

Nancy Feldman, president and CEO, UCare Minnesota

Glenn Forbes, M.D., CEO, Mayo Clinic, Rochester

Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth)

Donald M. Jacobs, CEO, Hennepin Faculty Associates

Former Sen. Sheila Kiscaden

Patricia Lindholm, M.D., Fergus Falls Medical Group

Lawrence Massa, CEO, Rice Memorial Hospital, Willmar

Noel Peterson, M.D., past president and CEO, Olmsted Medical Center

Richard Pettingill, president and CEO, Allina Hospitals and Clinics

Gary Cunningham, CEO, NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center

Jan Malcolm, CEO, Courage Center

Judy Schaubach, president, Education Minnesota

Lee Graczyk, interim executive director, Minnesota Senior Federation-Metropolitan Region