



Colorado Physicians to Lawmakers: Pass the Colorado Option for Our Patients

Dear Members of the Colorado General Assembly,

As physicians and health professionals practicing across Colorado, we urge you to provide more quality, affordable health care by passing the Colorado Option. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed how the U.S. health care system is failing to keep people safe and healthy. The Colorado Option is an opportunity for our state to pave the path forward for our patients.

COVID-19 has highlighted the necessity of ensuring that all Coloradans have access to affordable, quality coverage that meets their health care needs, even if they lose their job. The economic fallout from the pandemic continues to threaten layoffs and loss of employer-provided health insurance for many. Meanwhile, one in five Coloradans had trouble paying medical bills in the past year — the most since the Affordable Care Act took full effect in 2014. Things are only expected to get worse: Health care costs are projected to increase faster in the next seven years than the period between 2016 and 2018.

Americans continue to see worse health outcomes and lower life expectancy compared with people in other developed countries, even though we spend more on health care. Health care can make the difference between life and death, and Coloradans deserve a more affordable alternative.

Every day we see the harsh realities of how uninsured Coloradans and those who've lost their jobs and their employer-provided health care are more vulnerable to adverse health outcomes. We see everything from the patient who skips an expensive test that can detect a cancer early to the patient who ignores a chest pain that leads to a heart attack. When cost is no longer a barrier, people are more likely to see a doctor and get the treatment they need before a medical condition becomes a medical catastrophe.

As the current system is now, too many Coloradans are falling behind: Colorado hospital fees have gone up 58 percent between 2009 and 2017. As we've seen, communities of color are being disproportionately affected at higher rates by the virus, and are less likely to have access to affordable care.

In our many years serving our community as physicians, we can tell you without a doubt: When people have health care and can see a doctor when they want to, not just when they're facing a life-and-death emergency, they do better. Getting people coverage through the Colorado Option is critical, because individuals who have health coverage are more likely to get the care they need when they need it. That benefits them and their communities, and ultimately all of Colorado.

Colorado has an urgent opportunity to improve health care across our state, and that is why we urge you to pass the Colorado Option.

Thanks,

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