

Representative Jennifer L. Mann
132nd Legislative District

Health Care Issues in Pennsylvania

Current Situation:

Far too many people in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are without adequate health care coverage, seniors and many in the working class find it difficult to pay for prescription drugs and too many doctors are leaving the state due to outrageous medical malpractice insurance premiums.

There is no silver bullet that will remedy these issues. The state needs to create a comprehensive plan in order to address the overall problems within our health care system.

We have taken several steps to address the inadequacies within our health care structure, and we must work to build upon these recent successes.

Increasing Access to Health Care:

Several years ago, the Commonwealth created the Adult Basic health care program, which was designed to provide adults with basic health care coverage. To date, thousands of Pennsylvanians have participated in this low-cost health care program.

We also recently added additional state funds to drastically increase the number of people eligible for Adult Basic – thus moving many working Pennsylvanians from a waiting list.

In order to help provide working adults with health care coverage, I support a proposal that would allow small businesses to buy into this plan in order to provide health care for their employees.

Providing Prescription Drugs:

When it comes to quality health care, seeing a physician is only half the battle; a person must have access to the proper treatment for his/her ailment. Often, prescription drugs are needed to address a medical problem.

For senior citizens, our Commonwealth provides several programs including PACE, PACENET, and PHARMA that can assist them in receiving prescription drugs.

However we can do better. I am proposing legislation that will create a pilot program that would allow health care providers to donate unused and unopened prescription drugs to programs for the uninsured or impoverished individuals. A

similar program in the State of Oklahoma resulted in a tremendous amount of savings for the state.

Medical Malpractice Reform:

Our State can talk about access to health care, however without doctors, there would be no health care. Because of the rising cost of medical malpractice insurance, I am a strong advocate of caps on non-economic malpractice awards.

Considering the Commonwealth has already enacted several other measures over the last two years including eliminating the practice of “venue shopping”, passing a cap on medical malpractice awards will greatly reduce the cost of practicing medicine in Pennsylvania. This will help increase the access to health care coverage for all of our residents.

Children’s Health Insurance:

In the last four years, 11,719 additional children are enrolled in the PA Children’s Health Insurance Program. This is a major accomplishment that is moving Pennsylvania forward as a leader in health care for our children.

I am a strong supporter of Governor Rendell’s Cover All Kids program. This would expand the CHIP program – which is currently the oldest and most successful program in the nation – and make sure all of Pennsylvania’s children are insured and getting the services they need to grow up healthy. Premiums will be affordable for all families because the premium payment is based on a sliding scale based on the families’ income.

Cover All Kids will require a \$4.4 million investment in state funds and \$10.2 million in federal funds for its first year of operation. Once the federal government approves the program, Cover All Kids will take 15,000 kids off the state’s uninsured rolls in 2006-07, with additional children gaining coverage in future years. It is a critical part of the overall effort to reduce the number of uninsured children and adults statewide.