



MARYLAND CITIZENS' HEALTH INITIATIVE

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## Recent Health Care Policy Victories

- ✓ **Putting Maryland First:** The landmark Maryland Health Benefit Exchange Law of 2012 places Maryland at the forefront of states implementing the federal Affordable Care Act in a way that will make health care more affordable for all of us.
- ✓ **Saving kids from tobacco:** The Maryland General Assembly's decision to increase the tax on little cigars to 70 percent of the wholesale price and double the tax on smokeless (chew or spit) tobacco, will save thousands of young lives from addiction to these deadly products. This public health victory builds on the great success Maryland has had over the past decade in reducing teen smoking of cigarettes. Of course, we must do more. Maryland public health leaders will continue to fight to raise the tax on smokeless (chew or spit) tobacco to at least the level of the cigarette tax, and to increase the cigarette tax by another dollar per pack to save many more Marylanders from preventable tobacco caused illness and death.
- ✓ **Enhancing the public health benefits of 2011 alcohol tax increase:** Governor Martin O'Malley allocated revenue from our life-saving 2011 alcohol sales tax increase for the health care and public health needs originally proposed by the Lorraine Sheehan Alcohol Tax Coalition. The money will go to funding health care coverage for lower income adults; programs for people with developmental disabilities and mental health issues; drug and alcohol treatment and prevention; home and community-based care; and health care worker training. Our Executive and Legislative leadership have demonstrated that they believe a promise made is a promise kept. The alcohol tax increase will also save lives and reduce health care costs by reducing underage drinking and alcohol abuse.
- ✓ **Expanding coverage to more Maryland families:** Under the leadership of Governor Martin O'Malley, Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, and the Maryland General Assembly, Maryland has gone from 44th to 14th in the nation in providing health care coverage to low-income adults and has expanded health care coverage to over 250,000 parents, children, and seniors.

The Governor's Working Families and Small Business Health Coverage Act of 2007 provided health care coverage to over 200,000 uninsured Maryland parents and caregivers, many of whom would have otherwise had to use hospital emergency rooms for their health care needs. This in turn would increase what we all pay in higher premiums for uncompensated hospital care. Also passed in 2007, but not yet implemented due to economic constraints, is a Medicaid expansion for over 100,000 uninsured adults without dependents.

Funding for the Governor's Working Families and Small Business Health Coverage Act of 2007 was made possible by a one-dollar per pack increase in the state cigarette tax. This reduced the number of packs of cigarettes sold in Maryland by 74 million (and thereby saving thousands of lives from the horrors of tobacco caused illness and death and giving Maryland the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest smoking rate in the country) and raised an additional \$144 million per year. This revenue is almost identical to the state's cost for the health care expansion. Between 1998 to 2009, Marylanders who smoke decreased by 32%; double the national average of 16%.

- ✓ **Supporting employees of small businesses:** The Governor's Working Families and Small Business Health Coverage Act of 2007 also provided substantial grants to over 200 Maryland small businesses that had previously been unable to provide health care for their employees.
- ✓ **Covering more kids:** The O'Malley/Brown Administration has worked with the General Assembly and health care advocacy groups to locate and enroll over 85,000 children who are eligible for state health care coverage. New effective outreach and enrollment strategies include the Kids First Act, the Foster Kids Act, as well as reaching out to Medicaid eligible children in Baltimore City through the school lunch program – all of these inventive laws have aided in the exceptional enrollment of Maryland's children. The Administration has also worked to make sure that these children have proper dental care to avoid another tragedy like the death of young Deamonte Driver.

The Governor and General Assembly enacted legislation that increased the age limit from 18 to 25 for young people to stay on their parents' health care plans. This allows thousands of Maryland's young adults to keep health care coverage while they are students or look for jobs that offer health insurance.

- ✓ **Eliminating the donut hole for seniors:** The Governor and General Assembly, with substantial assistance from CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, enacted legislation that closes the prescription drug "donut hole" for many Maryland seniors by covering more of their prescription drug costs. To date, over 23,000 seniors have enrolled and benefited from this legislation.