

Governor Musgrove Unveils “Better Health for Mississippi Plan”

(Jackson, MS) Today Governor Ronnie Musgrove announced his new healthcare plan, Better Health for Mississippians, at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The Governor’s plan will promote preventative health services focused on improving health, preventing disease and keeping healthcare costs low. Additionally, his plan will increase access to healthcare in every region of the state.

“If we work together to make prevention an easy alternative to disease, we can improve the health of our state while saving taxpayer dollars,” Musgrove stated.

Starting in Our Schools

Prevention needs to begin with our children. Obesity is a leading contributor to heart disease, cancer, stroke, hypertension and asthma among other things. By implementing physical health education programs focused on nutrition and exercise and educating them in the dangers of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs, we can start our kids down the road to healthy living. Children learn by doing, and our children eat almost 1/3 of their meals at school. If we provide healthy foods in our school cafeterias and vending machines it will reinforce the lessons they’ve learned in the classroom. To help encourage the importance of healthy living the Governor will work to put a nurse in every public school.

Providing a Prescription Drug Benefit for Our Seniors

Governor Musgrove’s plan includes a voluntary prescription drug benefit for all seniors, HOPE (Heinz plan to Overcome Prescription drug Expenses) Mississippi. HOPE Mississippi will cover all yearly drug costs up to \$2000. HOPE Mississippi will utilize the benefits of a Pharmacy Benefit Manager to keep the cost of drugs low, and participants will contribute a small amount to the cost of the program. Seniors will enjoy complete flexibility as to where they fill their prescriptions.

More

Small Business Alliances to lower the cost of Health Insurance

To improve access to healthcare the Better Health for Mississippi Plan uses initiatives to will reduce the cost of health insurance. Encouraging Small Business Alliances will help provide affordable healthcare plans for businesses with up to 50 employees. According to a report in Health Affairs “the mere presence of alliances in states promoted price competition that, in part, led to the ease of comparative shopping, as well as standardized benefit packages and published rates.”

Preventative Screening

To implement preventative care, Governor Musgrove’s plan advocates working with insurance companies to cover the cost of screening procedures for gender specific personal health issues for men and women. Under Governor Musgrove’s Plan State Government will take the lead on this initiative by offering preventative services to state employees, under the state health insurance plan.

H.E.L.P. For the Temporarily Unemployed

COBRA offers the recently unemployed workers health benefits between jobs, but unfortunately due to loss of income, many seeking employment cannot afford the cost. Governor Musgrove’s plan will create a Health Emergency Loan Program that will allow the temporarily unemployed (less than one year) to borrow money against future earnings at low interest rates for the specific purpose of paying for their old health coverage under COBRA.

Reducing the Number of Uninsured

Mirroring a program that has been successful in Hinds county Governor Musgrove’s plan will promote insurance programs that are available to families that get up and go to work everyday through the Children’s Health Insurance Program and Medicaid.

Encouraging Mississippians to Pursue Careers in Healthcare and Expanding Access to Care in Underserved Areas

By expanding programs that forgive student loans in exchange for a pledge to practice in medically underserved areas we can increase access to health care in those areas. This program will be coupled with low interest housing loans for medical professionals. The Governor’s plan will use matching grants to encourage primary care clinics to open in and serve medically underserved and rural areas. A study published in the Oxford Journal for Public Health in 1994 found that the use of non-physician providers is an effective way to achieve cost containment and improve access to primary care for those residing in medically underserved areas.

Three to four nurse practitioners, physicians Assistants or other non-physician medical personnel can be trained at the same cost as educating and training one physician - and in far less time. Governor Musgrove will establish satellite programs to train non-physician primary care providers in medically underserved areas. Similar programs have shown that those who participate in these programs are older, educated professionals plan to remain to serve in the area where they train.

“My healthcare plan will improve the health of our citizens and our state, and will save taxpayers millions in healthcare costs each year, Governor Musgrove stated.”

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