

Health care access

BACKGROUND:

Access to healthcare is a critical need for working families and fundamental for children’s academic success. Yet, Florida continues to have one of the highest uninsured rates in the nation. Nearly 2,544,700 Floridians still do not have health care coverage. Florida ranks at the bottom of states in the percentage of low-income children getting preventive dental care. While home and community-based care benefits seniors and costs far less than nursing home care, too many Florida seniors remain on wait lists for these important services.

Expand Access to Healthcare: Although, the rate of those uninsured has dropped to the lowest rate in history, still 13% of Floridians live without health insurance. Critical programs such as Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provide coverage to nearly 4.4 million low-income children, pregnant women, adults, seniors, and people with disabilities in Florida. To address the health disparities that still exist, especially among low-income households, access to care must not be blocked by financial or logistical barriers. Changes to current healthcare laws should increase the number of individuals who are appropriately insured.

Expand Access to Children’s Oral Health: A child’s oral health affects learning, play and healthy eating. Dental disease is the most common childhood disease, affecting five times as many children as asthma. Children with poor oral health are three times more likely to miss school and four times more likely to perform poorly when compared to their healthy counterparts. However, many low-income children in Florida do not receive any dental care. Florida’s low Medicaid reimbursement rate, just 37 percent of the standard rate for private insurance, severely limits the number of dentists serving this population. To increase educational success, reduce health care costs, and improve the short and long term quality of life and productivity of Florida’s children and future workforce, funding and legislation are needed to expand access to dental services for children.

Expand Home and Community Based Services for the Elderly: Florida’s fastest growing demographic group is seniors over 65. Among those seniors, 32% live above the poverty line, but cannot afford even a very modest living. Home and community-based

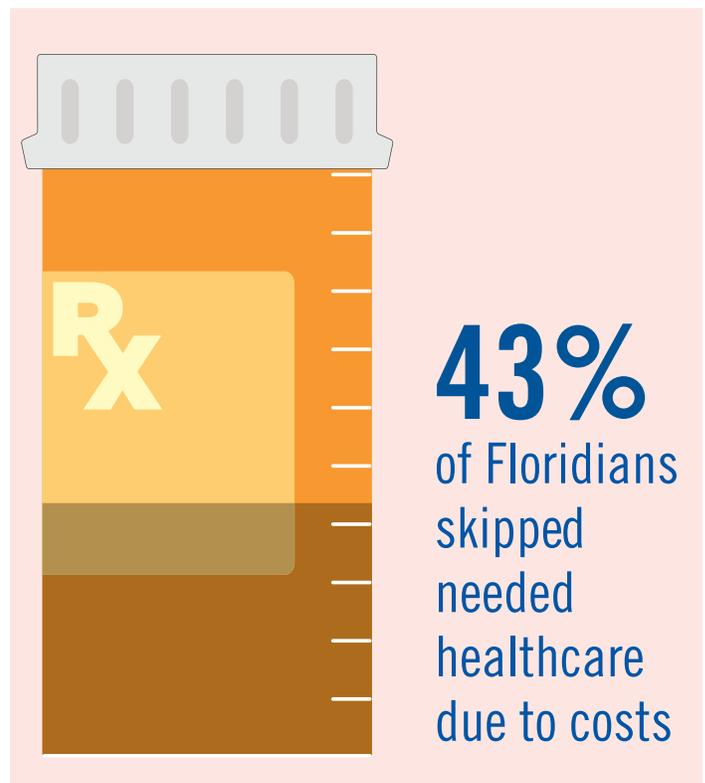
services, such as Community Care for the Elderly, provide support for frail older adults and reduce the cost burden for Florida families as well as taxpayers. The average monthly cost to care for a senior in the CCE Program is \$605 compared to \$2,277 per month (state share of cost) for nursing home care. Over 59,000 seniors statewide are on waitlists for home care support services, including Alzheimer’s Respite Care.

PROPOSED CHANGES

ENSURE that changes to our healthcare laws improve on existing healthcare coverage for Florida’s families.

SUPPORT legislation to expand access to dental care for children.

MAXIMIZE funding for home and community-based services to provide support for older adults and reduce the cost burden for Florida families and taxpayers.



Source: Commonwealth Fund (2014)