

2021 HEALTHCARE ACCESS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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Voices for Virginia's Children is a member of the Healthcare for All Virginians coalition. The Healthcare for All Virginians coalition is made up of more than 110 organizations across the commonwealth that believe that all Virginians should have access to affordable and quality health coverage.

As of December 10, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports there have been over 285,000 deaths from COVID-19 in the U.S., and the number continues to rise steeply with a disproportionate toll on communities of color. Families are put in a position to compare and contrasts the risk of staying home to maintain the safety of their household or to keep a roof over their family's head by going to work due to a lack of paid time off, including sick days and paid medical leave. While COVID-19 is one pandemic, it is layered with racism – another public health crisis that widens existing disparities caused by inequities that contribute to the social determinants of health. Communities of color are experiencing much higher hospitalization rates. For example, Black communities have almost a 10% hospitalization rate compared to the 6% average. One in eight households in the United States with children in the fall of 2020 did not have access to health insurance. In Virginia, more than one-third of people with children reported that they had delayed getting medical care in November 2020. Without insurance, families are forced to decide to not get the care they need.

In Virginia, one-third of families delayed getting medical care because of the pandemic. Nearly 1 in 4 adults with kids at home did not get medical care at all. Providing access to health care should be a guarantee during a pandemic.

WHEN PARENTS HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE, CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE

During the 2020 legislative session, Virginia made great strides by increasing access to health insurance for low-income mothers through FAMIS MOMS and eliminating the 40-quarters rule – which is contingent upon federal approval. But we still have more work to do. The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that inequitable access to health insurance inadvertently impacts the health of an entire community, the state, and the nation. By closing the gaps in access, we can increase the health, well-being, and prosperity of Virginians as a whole and further create a sense of normalcy by decreasing the spread of the coronavirus, increasing contact tracing through testing, and ensuring those most vulnerable, our children, have access to long, successful, and healthy lives.

EXPAND MEDICAID COVERAGE TO IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

Extend Medicaid coverage for legally residing young adults from age 18 to age 21.

The Virginia Department of Medicaid Assistance requested this change for the 2021 budget. Extending Medicaid coverage for legally residing adults aged 18-21 would help decrease disparities in healthcare coverage by ensuring young people starting off in life and in their careers have access to healthcare coverage.

Expand Medicaid coverage for “emergency services” for COVID-19, including screening and testing, to all immigrants meeting financial eligibility criteria as previously extended in 12 other states.

Several other states have taken steps during the current crisis to help their residents regardless of immigration status. Federal law allows states to cover COVID-19 screening, testing, and all related treatment for any immigrant who meets financial requirements for Medicaid but does not meet the immigration status requirement. This policy change will assist lower income immigrants in obtaining needed health care to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus, increase positive health outcomes and reduce deaths. The commonwealth has the opportunity to be both preventative and reactive in addressing the pandemic on behalf of Virginians.

INVEST IN HEALTHY BIRTH OUTCOMES

Extend eligibility for FAMIS Moms prenatal and delivery coverage to all pregnant women, including undocumented immigrant mothers.

The FAMIS MOMS program provides healthcare coverage to low-income pregnant women in order to liaise important early and regular prenatal care to increase the likelihood for healthy birth outcomes. FAMIS MOMS encourages pregnant women to get early and regular prenatal care. The policy would ensure equitable access to all women, regardless of status.