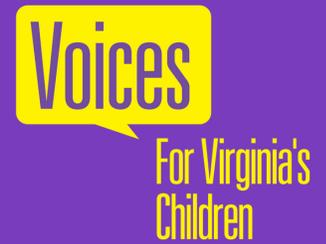


2021 HEALTH EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT



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As the world faces a global health crisis, it is absolutely critical to be able to see a doctor when necessary. However, 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. [Kids, Families and COVID-19: Pandemic Pain Points and a Roadmap for Recovery.] Providing access to health care should be a guarantee during a pandemic. While Virginians are faced with the trauma of the pandemic and survival, Black and brown children are also expected to learn how to navigate through systemic biases and structural racism in order to stay alive. This includes experiencing police violence and gun violence, the school-to-prison pipeline, anti-Blackness and anti-immigration sentiments, health risks, and exposure to environmental toxins. Voices priorities align with the Healthcare for All Virginians Coalition to build off previous efforts to expand health care coverage in Virginia, particularly to disadvantaged populations, including immigrants.

ONE IN EIGHT HOUSEHOLDS IN THE UNITED STATES WITH CHILDREN IN THE FALL OF 2020 DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE.

When parents have access to health insurance, children are more likely to have insurance. This inadvertently increases their access to overall health and well-being. Virginia's Medicaid expansion increased health care access to hundreds of thousands of families in the commonwealth. However, there's still a percentage of the population that does not have access to health care. According to the Census Household Pulse Survey, 11 percent of adults with children do not have any health insurance in Virginia compared to the national average of 12 percent. In addition, there are significant racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare access nationally as 23 percent of those who identified as Latinx, 14 percent African Americans, and 20 percent of adults of two or more races reported that they lacked health insurance in comparison to 8 percent of white people and 7 percent of Asians. Without insurance, families are forced to decide to not get the care they need. More than a third of people with children reported that they had delayed getting medical care in the previous month.

INFORMED PERSPECTIVE:

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.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

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

The Virginia Department of Medicaid Assistance requested this change for 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.

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

The FAMIS MOMS program provides health care coverage for 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.

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.