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More Virginia Chambers of Commerce Express Support for Uninsured Health Care Coverage, Citing Positive Economic Benefits

Regional Chambers from Northern, Northwest, Southside, Southwest, Southeastern, Western, and Central Virginia Join the Call for Increased Health Care Access to Create Jobs, Help Workers, Boost the Economy, and Enhance Wellness

RICHMOND, VA – A growing number of local and regional Chambers of Commerce from across the Commonwealth have offered their support to increasing health care coverage access for thousands of hard-working, low-income, uninsured Virginians. The latest Chambers of Commerce to voice support for expanded health care access in Virginia include the **Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce**, the **Franklin-Southampton Area Chamber of Commerce**, the **Fredericksburg Regional**

Chamber of Commerce, the Richlands Area Chamber of Commerce, the Top of Virginia Regional Chamber (Winchester area), the **Culpeper Chamber of Commerce, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce, the Prince William Chamber of Commerce, the Colonial Heights Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce.** These Chambers join several other key regional Chambers in Virginia that have also taken public positions in favor of Virginia recovering federal funding available through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to help as many as 300,000 uninsured Virginians get health coverage. Those Chambers include the **Bristol Chamber of Commerce, Chamber RVA, the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Hampton Roads Chamber, the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce, and the Roanoke Regional Chamber.** (A previous news release announcing those Chambers' support for coverage access can be viewed online [here](#).) These Chambers support increased access to health care coverage because it will return taxpayer dollars to the Commonwealth, improve public health, help workers, support jobs, and strengthen the economy. Together, the Chambers represent more than **xxxx** businesses in Virginia with **xxxxx** employees.

Increased health care coverage access for thousands of uninsured Virginians will be beneficial to the Commonwealth in many ways. So far, 32 states and Washington, D.C. have expanded health care access. A wide range of scholarly studies has shown that across the board states that expanded coverage saw significant reductions in the uninsured rate and uncompensated care, as well as positive economic effects. In Virginia, expanded coverage access is projected to produce millions in state general fund budget savings as well as overall state savings.

Research conducted by Chmura Economics & Analytics has forecast that the total economic impact from increased coverage in Virginia would average \$3.5 billion and 26,500 jobs from 2015-2020. Virginia's own estimates project about \$100 million in net savings through state fiscal year 2022. By declining to draw down funds available through ACA – funds that are supported by Virginia tax dollars but not currently coming back here – the Commonwealth is missing out on an estimated \$5 million in funding each day and has foregone more than \$10.5 billion in funding in recent years.

“Access to quality health care is important to Virginians from all walks of life, whether they live in populated cities and counties or rural communities,” said Kate Bates, President and CEO of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce. “Finding a way to help more Virginians get the care they need, where they live, will simultaneously help people and enhance our Commonwealth in the process.”

“Like many regions, we in Southside Virginia are always looking to strengthen and diversify our economy. To address health care access challenges, elected state leaders in Richmond have identified innovative solutions that support public well-being and economic growth,” noted Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce President and Chief Executive Officer Alexis Ehrhardt. “Having a strong, local health care delivery system is important to all of the citizens, businesses, and public agencies in the Dan River Region.”

Susan Spears, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce added “local businesses and their employees drive our regional economy, so policies that support businesses and the communities they serve are beneficial to Virginia's prosperity. Increasing health care access is one such policy. Many working Virginians lack health care coverage so an extended illness or injury can separate a person from the workforce, leading to financial strain for the individual and the broader economy. For these reasons, we support efforts by state leaders to find a way to strengthen our economy by increasing health care access.”

“Virginia is consistently ranked as a great area to live, raise a family, and to do business,” said Franklin-Southampton Area Chamber of Commerce President Kim Marks. “Access to quality, community-based health care is an important part of why Virginia is viewed positively, and it's a key element in fostering a

strong pro-business climate. The bipartisan plan that has been presented as a way to help uninsured Virginians get health care presents a timely opportunity to keep the Commonwealth and its people healthy and vibrant.”

Added Richlands Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Ginger Branton: “Our local hospital is a cornerstone in our community that responds to people’s medical needs regardless of patients’ ability to pay, and also serves as a top local employer in our area. Like other regions in Virginia, our community is home to many good people without health insurance. There are 2,200 adults in Tazewell County who could be helped if Virginia expands health care coverage access, which would improve lives, support local hospitals, and help communities such as ours throughout the state.”

“The Winchester area is fortunate to have a high-quality health care system where people can go for care, but not every community in Virginia has that level of access,” said Top of Virginia Regional Chamber Executive Director Richard Kennedy. “The development of a Virginia-specific plan to address health care access challenges while promoting personal responsibility is a constructive example of lawmakers from both parties working together to strengthen the state and its economy, while helping the public so more people can access health care in their communities when they need it.”

“A thriving community has a healthy mix of business, education, civic, health care, and government stakeholders all working to enhance the quality of life for the people and families that call it home,” added Wes Mayles, President and CEO of the Culpeper Chamber of Commerce. “Enabling more Virginians to secure health care coverage is a positive step to help improve the lives of people in counties, cities, and towns across the Commonwealth.”

“Prince William is one of the fastest growing localities in Virginia. With growth comes opportunity for progress and assessment to ensure we meet community needs for education, infrastructure, and health care services for the good of all citizens,” said Prince William Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Debbie Jones. “In our community, more than 12,000 people would benefit from the proposed bipartisan plan to expand health care coverage access in Virginia. This innovative approach will improve the quality of life for more Virginians while freeing up state resources to invest in other priorities like higher education and economic development.”

“Helping individuals and businesses access health care here in the city of Colonial Heights is imperative to the growth and the strength of our workforce,” added John Brandt, Executive Director of the Colonial Heights Chamber of Commerce “Individuals without quality health care have to choose to come to work instead of seeking the proper treatment. This, in turn, can lead to other workers becoming sick, which harms overall work productivity. To keep Virginia strong, we humbly ask our elected leaders to find compromise on funding quality health care for Virginians.”

“Chambers work to enrich and improve their communities to benefit the people who live, work, and play there,” said Mark S. Ingrao, President and CEO of the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce. “Increasing access to health care for all Virginians is a common sense step to reduce businesses’ costs and help enhance communities across the Commonwealth.”

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