“Governor’s Perspective on Health Care for Florida’s Vulnerable Populations”

Presented at the Florida Center on Medicaid and the Uninsured

Annual Conference
June 28, 2006
Tallahassee, FL

Karen Halperin
Deputy Policy Chief, Office of Governor Charlie Crist
“The Sunshine State should be a healthy state.”

~ Governor Charlie Crist

…there’s no better place than Florida to enjoy healthy lifestyles …
Florida’s Healthcare Accomplishments

• Health information technology
• Biomedical innovation
• Medicaid reform – model for other states
• Transparency of healthcare quality and pricing data – for example: MyFloridaRx.com
• Excellent rates in childhood immunizations

• And we also lead the nation in challenges!

• **Challenges ahead:** extraordinary diversity and a growing population
  – Crist sees diversity as one of Florida’s greatest resources. It also underscores the truism that for problems in health care, there will be few one-size-fits-all solutions.
Broad Healthcare Issues on Crist’s Agenda When Entering Office

• Increase affordability of health insurance and Rx drugs

• Increase access to quality primary care and specialty care.
• Decrease the reliance on Emergency Departments

• Emphasize early intervention for mental health and substance abuse

• Fund biomedical research, especially stem cell research to approach treatments and cures for degenerative diseases

• Streamline and revamp the Florida KidCare program to maximize enrollment among eligible children

• Promote healthy lifestyles and decrease the prevalence of preventable diseases

• And more…
The Agenda, in Action…

• For the regular legislative session of 2007, Governor Crist directed our staff to focus on a select number of these issues.

• However, nearly every area that was described in Crist’s campaign agenda was addressed in some capacity – and we are proud of what we have been able to achieve so far.
In this presentation:

1. Discuss initiatives and efforts already in progress.

2. Discuss key areas Governor Crist is committed to addressing.
   - For all of these issues, success will depend on the collaboration of the healthcare community.
   - Our hope is that by communicating these objectives we can work together in fulfilling shared goals.
Issues in Progress:  
*Created the State Surgeon General*

- Governor Crist proposed legislation to create the State Surgeon General.

- The State Surgeon General heads the Department of Health, and will serve as Florida's leading voice to promote healthy lifestyles and disease prevention initiatives.
  - This was an important and symbolic measure.
  - The vision is for the State Surgeon General to become identifiable to the public as a resource and credible spokesperson for healthcare in the state.

- The Surgeon General’s focus will include:
  - Developing and advocating of public health policy.
  - Promoting health literacy so that Floridians are better equipped to take personal responsibility and make informed health care decisions.
    - This also relates to the Governor’s emphasis on plain language in government.
  - Building of collaborative partnerships with schools, universities, businesses and communities to forward these initiatives.
Issues in Progress: *Physical Fitness & Nutrition*

- Related to the creation of the State Surgeon General are the Governor’s other efforts to promote physical fitness and healthy lifestyles.

- Two measures are already underway:
  - The passage of the Governor’s bill to require additional physical education in public schools.
  - The Creation of the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness.
Issues in Progress:  
*Physical Fitness & Nutrition*

- **Physical Education in Schools**
  
  – Governor Crist proposed and signed legislation to ensure that public-school elementary students receive at least 150 minutes of PE each week (an average of 30 minutes a day).

  – The goal is to help young students have good experiences with physical activity so they will choose a lifelong active lifestyle.

  – The bill further requires the Commissioner of Education to provide an Internet-based clearinghouse for teacher professional development in physical education and school wellness.
Issues in Progress: *Physical Fitness & Nutrition*

- **Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness**
  - 20-member Council will develop a state plan to promote fitness and nutrition, and to reduce the number of chronic diseases resulting from obesity within 10 years.
  - Members include professional athletes, health advocates, business and community interests, and other experts.
  - The Council will:
    - Coordinate efforts of state agencies and local governments in developing initiatives.
    - Evaluate the implementation of daily PE courses for elementary school students, and the feasibility of similar requirements for middle and high school students by the year 2012.
    - Evaluate nutritional value of school lunches.
    - Evaluate the availability of certified PE teachers
    - Look at the possibility of school districts maintaining independent fitness advisory panels.
Issues in Progress:  
*Protecting Vulnerable Populations*

- This legislative session was also marked by a number of initiatives to improve the health and welfare of Florida’s most vulnerable children and adults.
Issues in Progress: Protecting Vulnerable Populations

• **Office of Adoption and Child Protection**
  – Crist forwarded legislation to create the Office of Adoption and Child Protection, and named the Chief Child Advocate to head it.
  – The bill provides greater incentives to families who adopt children – and especially special needs children - out of state custody.
  – The bill also provides $1.5 million for a public awareness campaign to spread information about adoption options and child protection.
Issues in Progress: *Protecting Vulnerable Populations*

- **Independent Living Transition Services**
  - These programs help young adults ease into and sustain independence through a variety of services.
  
  - General Bob Butterworth and Governor Crist reached out to young adults who are leaving foster care to learn of their challenges.
  
  - Crist signed legislation to increase independent living transition services for young adults aging out of foster care.
  
  - The bill provides assistance for young adults to open personal bank accounts, to receive health coverage for a longer period of time, and to obtain further education.
  
  - It also increases opportunities for young adults still in foster care to receive drivers’ licenses so that they can become or stay employed.
Issues in Progress:

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

- **Home and Community-Based Services**
  - Governor Crist feels strongly about these services, which allow people to remain in their homes and communities rather than institutions while receiving care.

  - The Governor’s budget provided an extra $116 million in funding to cover home and community-based services for persons with disabilities.
Issues in Progress:  
*Increasing access to care*

- Governor Crist is committed to improving access to primary and specialty care. Although most of the work in this area is still ahead of us, progress is under way.

- Crist signed legislation to provide $3.5 million to expand working hours and services at Primary Care Access Networks (PCANs) in 5 Florida counties.
  - PCANs provide access to health services to uninsured and underinsured individuals.
  - They consist of federally qualified health centers, primary care providers, mental health and substance abuse providers, local hospitals, businesses, county governments and other institutions.
  - By increasing hours of operations and services provided, Governor Crist believes that these networks will help divert people away from Emergency Rooms and into more appropriate venues of care.
Issues in Progress:  

**Healthcare Workforce Issues**

- Florida faces a shortage in our healthcare workforce. Especially over the past 6 years, our population has grown while the number of healthcare practitioners has not grown accordingly.

- Governor Crist signed legislation to address this problem – at least as it relates to physicians. The bill will provide Florida with important data on the status of our physician workforce.

- It directs the Department of Health to administer a survey to physicians as they renew their licenses, and then use the information to:
  - Monitor and report on the supply and geographical distribution of physicians across the state.
  - Develop strategies to ensure the number of graduates from Florida’s medical schools are adequate to meet the population’s needs.
  - Develop policies to create and expand graduate medical education positions.
  - Develop strategies to attract and retain physicians in Florida.
  - Such as loan repayment or forgiveness, or incentives for relocation to underserved areas.
Issues in Progress:

Mental health & substance abuse

• Governor Crist is committed to increasing the focus on early intervention and appropriate treatment for mental health and substance abuse - - to improve people’s live and divert people away from the criminal justice system.

• Signed bill to create a grant program to address forensic mental health needs in the community.
  – The bill provides the Department of Children and Families (DCF) with $4 million to administer the grant program, which will go toward preventing individuals from ending up in the corrections system when they could instead receive appropriate and preventative care.
  – Included $53.4 million in the budget to provide services for individuals with serious mental illness who are in the criminal justice system.

• Signed bill that will allow a reorganization of DCF to integrate mental health and substance abuse into the department’s overall mission and structure.
Key Policy Initiatives Still Ahead

• The issues just presented set the stage for what’s ahead. The next issues highlight a few of the areas that the Governor feels most strongly about today:

• Promotion of stem cell research to treat degenerative diseases

• A reduction in the number of uninsured and underinsured in Florida, including increasing enrollment in the Florida KidCare program.
Stem Cell Research

• This past session, Governor Crist proposed a bill that would have provided $20 million in competitive grant dollars to fund stem cell research in Florida.

• Crist believes strongly in the promise of these technologies and wants their potentials to be realized in Florida.

• The bill did not pass the Florida House of Representatives but progress was still made.
  – The process of discussing the stem cell bill raised awareness and did garner significant support. It also points to where the administration is heading on this issue.
Florida KidCare Program

• The Governor and the legislature each forwarded proposals last session to restructure the Florida KidCare program.

• The Governor believes that today, too many children are left without health coverage because the current system is fragmented and complicated for parents to navigate.

• Governor Crist’s proposal looks to maximize enrollment in KidCare among eligible children through a combination of:
  – Increased and improved outreach to families.
  – Streamlining the various components of the program to reduce confusion, and to ensure eligible children become and stay enrolled.
The Uninsured & Underinsured

- This issue is central to all discussions on healthcare in Florida....
- As the research of the Florida Center has demonstrated, the difficulty of finding affordable health insurance is greatest for those who are self-employed or employed by a small company.
- Governor Crist is committed to:
  - Improving options for employer-based coverage.
  - Identifying strong, market-based approaches to lower the cost of coverage for all Floridians.
  - Working with industry leaders to expand affordable and viable coverage options.
  - Calling upon Floridians to take personal responsibility for healthcare decisions.
- The problem of covering the uninsured is not just a matter for individual states. Governor Crist wants Florida to take the lead in addressing national strategies for addressing the uninsured as well.
• Governor Crist is optimistic that by working closely with researchers and industry leaders we can make Florida a national leader in approaching the affordability and quality of healthcare.

• The administration invites your collaboration and partnership in tackling these issues...
Thank you!

- **Contact information:**
  Karen Halperin  
  Deputy Policy Chief  
  Office of Policy & Budget, Health & Human Services  
  Office of Governor Charlie Crist  
  [Karen.Halperin@MyFlorida.com](mailto:Karen.Halperin@MyFlorida.com)  
  (850) 488-7734