

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

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*“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 lives 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!

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