

Sign-On Letter Urging a Hearing on HB 1480

The Honorable Lee Hawkins
Chair, House Health Committee
Georgia House of Representatives
Georgia State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Chairman Hawkins,

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, want to thank you for your past support of expanding health care access in Georgia, including efforts to seek federal waivers to expand Medicaid coverage, strengthen rural health systems, and expand Medicaid coverage for critically ill infants. We respectfully urge you to continue this commitment to improving health care access by scheduling a hearing in the House Health Committee on **HB 1480**, legislation that would establish a pathway toward a universal, publicly financed health care system for the people of Georgia.

Georgia faces a deepening health care crisis that demands serious consideration of bold solutions. At the forefront of this crisis is the growing strain on rural health care. Rural communities across our state are losing access to care at an alarming rate. Over the past decade, numerous rural hospitals in Georgia have closed or scaled back critical services, leaving entire regions without nearby emergency care, obstetric services, or specialty treatment. These closures place patients at risk and strain the remaining health systems that serve large geographic areas with limited resources.

Meanwhile, the cost of health care continues to rise faster than wages, state budgets, and household incomes. Georgia families, businesses, and taxpayers are paying more every year while outcomes and access remain uneven. It is clear that the status quo is not working for many Georgians.

Georgia also continues to have one of the highest uninsured rates in the nation, leaving hundreds of thousands of Georgians without reliable access to care. Families across the state are forced to delay or forgo treatment because of cost, while medical bills remain a leading cause of financial hardship and bankruptcy.

There is significant concern that Georgia's uninsured crisis may worsen in the near future. Temporary enhanced premium subsidies that helped make coverage more affordable under the Affordable Care Act are expected to expire unless Congress acts. If those subsidies lapse, many Georgians will see their premiums rise substantially, putting coverage out of reach for thousands of working families and increasing the number of uninsured residents in our state.

For those who do have insurance, coverage often fails to provide the security that people expect. Patients and physicians alike increasingly face denials, prior authorization delays, and administrative barriers imposed by insurance companies. These obstacles can

delay necessary treatment, create confusion for patients, and add significant administrative burden for clinicians and hospitals. Frustration with these practices is widespread and bipartisan, shared by patients, providers, employers, and policymakers across the political spectrum.

HB 1480 presents an opportunity for the legislature to examine a comprehensive alternative: a publicly financed health care system designed to guarantee coverage for every resident while simplifying administration and aligning resources toward patient care. Whether one ultimately supports or opposes this approach, the scale of the challenges facing our health care system warrants an open and thoughtful discussion.

A committee hearing would allow legislators, physicians, patients, economists, hospital leaders, and policy experts to present evidence and perspectives about how a universal health program could address Georgia's most pressing health care challenges. At a time when Georgians across the political spectrum are demanding solutions to rising costs, insurance barriers, and hospital closures, it is critical that the legislature provide a forum for this conversation.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the House Health Committee schedule a hearing on HB 1480 during this legislative session. Georgians deserve the opportunity for a transparent and substantive discussion about how best to ensure affordable, accessible health care for every resident of our state.

Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership on issues affecting the health and well-being of the people of Georgia.

Sincerely,

Organizations:

Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America
Atlanta, GA

BLKHLTH
Atlanta, GA

Georgia Equality
Georgia

Georgia Interfaith Public Policy Center
Atlanta, GA

Georgians for a Universal Health Program
Atlanta, GA

Health Students Taking Action Together
Georgia
Atlanta, GA

Indivisible Georgia Coalition
Georgia

My Style Matters, Inc.
Atlanta, GA

New Disabled South
Georgia

Public Citizen
Washington, DC

Individuals:

Alyssa Greenhouse, MD
Physician
Atlanta, GA

Henry Kahn, MD
Emeritus Professor
Atlanta, GA

Mark Spencer, MD
Physician
Atlanta, GA

Toby Terwilliger, MD
Board Member, Physicians for a National
Health Program
Atlanta, GA

Colleen Tope
Medical Student
Atlanta, GA

Rita Valenti, RN
Clarkston, GA