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HORRY COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Health Care



A Right Not a Privilege

care compared to the national average of 9.9%. Prior to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) it is estimated that as many as 30% of adults aged 18-64 lacked any coverage. The ACA was a huge step in the right direction; however, it is not a permanent solution to the ongoing issue of affordable healthcare coverage or the containment of medical costs.

The Impact of COVID-19

The need for healthcare coverage has never been more pronounced than with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in loss of income for thousands of workers when non-essential businesses were shuttered, either temporarily or permanently.

Although workers were able to claim unemployment benefits during the height of the pandemic in Horry County, they did not always qualify for Medicaid or might have been unable to afford healthcare coverage through private insurance plans or the ACA. This meant millions had no healthcare coverage if they contracted the virus and required hospitalization.

In addition to extended recovery periods, the coronavirus can have lasting health effects requiring ongoing care long after the patient has recovered. Anyone who has recovered from the coronavirus and has long-term health issues now has a pre-existing condition.

Medicaid

The Republican-controlled South Carolina legislature has refused to participate in receiving additional federal funding to support expanded access to Medicaid. According to a recent article in The Post and Courier, "South Carolina is one of 14 states that continues to turn down federal money to expand eligibility for the low-income Medicaid program." It also states "The nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation estimates at least

The Horry County Democratic Party supports healthcare as a right, not a privilege. We continue to support the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and its requirement to cover pre-existing conditions, even if covered through a private insurance plan or employment. We also support the expansion of Medicaid, which is also provided under the ACA. Eliminating the ACA would have a potentially devastating financial impact on tens of millions of Americans.

HCDP also fully supports the need to control ever rising drug costs, and the ability for Medicare to negotiate drug prices and to increase funding to combat the ongoing opioid crisis in Horry County.

Divided Healthcare Benefits

Much like other parts of the United States, Horry County is sharply divided on access to affordable healthcare with low-income and minority households being impacted the most. Those with good jobs, which include health insurance benefits are better able to cover costs when urgent or long-term medical care is needed. Unfortunately, due to heavy reliance on seasonal jobs and part-time work in general, a large part of the population in Horry County lacks these benefits, thus creating potential dire health and financial concerns. This leads to a reluctance or inability to seek help when it's needed the most.

According to US News and World Report, 16% of South Carolina residents lack any form of health-

92,000 adults would qualify for Medicaid coverage if South Carolina expanded eligibility rules.”

In 2018, Governor Henry McMaster began the effort to require additional work requirements for those receiving Medicaid benefits in South Carolina. Recipients would be required to work at least 80 hours per month, a significant challenge for many individuals in Horry County during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Rising Cost of Prescription Drugs

Drug costs continue to increase every year with millions of people risking their lives because they can't afford life sustaining medication, such as insulin which had a 54 percent increase in cost in 2014 alone. This may lead to some patients rationing their insulin to make it last longer, which leads to medical complications and potentially death.

Even with health insurance, some drugs can be costly unless financial assistance is available from pharmaceutical manufacturers. Healthcare companies negotiate pricing with drug companies; however, the co-pay from the patient depends on their deductible and out-of-pocket maximum for their plan. Those without health insurance have to pay full price unless they sign up for discount drug cards through companies like GoodRx® or SingleCare®. Some drugs, even with these discount vendors, are cost prohibitive.

Although the Veterans Administration can also negotiate drug prices, Medicare is currently not allowed. This means those who are most likely in need of life sustaining medication can find it financially challenging.

Opioid Addiction

There were 85 deaths attributed to opioids and six deaths due to heroin in Horry County in 2018 and while millions of dollars are already being spent statewide to address the issue of opioid addiction, little has been done in Horry County. One exception has been a \$60,000 study conducted on the problem in Horry and Georgetown Counties. Horry-Georgetown Technical College Professor Renee Causey's study has helped shed light on the problem. Horry County is cur-

rently ranked worst in the state for opioid-related deaths. Causey believes that additional resources and coordination could greatly reduce unnecessary deaths. In addition to numerous specific recommendations in her report, she states, “Horry and Georgetown Counties receive a very small portion of the state's overall funding when compared to the need. It is strongly recommended that a portion of the state funding be directly allocated to Horry and Georgetown Counties combined.”

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