



## *2015 Policy Priorities*

*Georgians for a Healthy Future is a non-profit, non-partisan consumer health advocacy organization. Our policy priorities were developed with broad input from community stakeholders and we will work collaboratively with our partners to advance these public policy priorities in 2015.*

- 1. Close Georgia's coverage gap by expanding Medicaid.** Thousands of Georgians have signed up for low-cost coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace. However, because Georgia has not yet accepted federal funds available to cover low-income Georgians through Medicaid, approximately 300,000 Georgians remain unable to get coverage. These Georgians do not qualify for Medicaid under current rules and do not earn enough money to qualify for financial help through the Marketplace. They are stuck in the coverage gap. Georgians for a Healthy Future supports closing this coverage gap by expanding coverage through Medicaid to all Georgians with incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level.
- 2. Ensure access to quality health care services for Medicaid and PeachCare beneficiaries.** The Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids programs provide health insurance for many of our state's most vulnerable citizens, including low-income children, some low-income parents, and people with disabilities. Enrollment in these programs is growing as uninsured families explore health insurance options and find that their children meet the eligibility criteria. This presents an opportunity to bring down our state's uninsured rate and improve access to care. Georgians for a Healthy Future will support policies that facilitate continuous coverage and enrollment for eligible Georgians, preserve and expand access to care, ensure robust provider networks, and improve health outcomes. Specifically, in 2015 Georgians for a Healthy Future will advocate for maintenance of the enhanced primary care provider reimbursement rate that was temporarily funded through federal dollars. Sustaining this enhanced reimbursement rate

is necessary to ensure adequate provider networks and access to primary care services for Georgians covered through these plans.

- 3. Maximize enrollment and ensure a positive experience for Georgia consumers with private health insurance.** Georgia consumers are enrolling in private health plans at a rapid pace. As more Georgians enter this market, it is critical that these plans remain affordable; that consumers have the tools and information they need to understand their plans and access appropriate care; that provider networks and formularies are adequate to ensure meaningful access to all covered benefits; and that consumer protections are in place and enforced. Georgians for a Healthy Future will advocate at the state and national level for legislative and administrative approaches to ensure a positive consumer experience.
- 4. Increase the tobacco tax.** Georgia has one of the lowest tobacco taxes in the country at just 37 cents per pack, which makes tobacco much more accessible to youth in Georgia than it is in other states. Increasing the tobacco tax to the national average will reduce youth smoking, addiction, and the burden of chronic disease in our state. Increasing Georgia's tobacco tax will also bring much-needed revenue to our state which can be invested in health care coverage, access, and prevention.
- 5. Re-invest in Georgia's public health infrastructure to support a healthy and prosperous state.** Our state's public health system plays a critical role by vaccinating children, monitoring and preventing epidemics and chronic diseases, ensuring safe food and water, and providing both clinical and community-based preventive services. Despite an increasing need for these services and a growing awareness of the importance of social determinants on community health outcomes, Georgia's per capita public health spending is among the lowest in the nation and our public health infrastructure has sustained severe budget cuts in recent years. This has harmed Georgia's ability to conduct meaningful health planning and prevention initiatives that can lead to improved population health and productivity. Georgians for a Healthy Future supports re-investment in public health and prevention.