mahp
Michigan Association of Health Plans

MAHP Opposes SB 542
MAHP Testimony before Senate Health Policy
February 2, 2016

The premise of the Healthy Michigan Plan was to reach those who don't qualify for current Medicaid and who do not have other forms of insurance. These individuals are also between 48 percent and 138 percentile of poverty. Most of them are employed, but often at small businesses whose owners cannot afford to provide health care.

Once enrolled in the Healthy Michigan Plan, these men and women can get health care from local physicians. They no longer seek medical care in the most expensive setting such as hospital emergency departments or delay care that mitigates any advantage of preventive services and resulted in uncompensated care that those of us who pay premiums would absorb—the so called "cost-shifting effect".

So we have a program that helps workers be more productive by making them healthier, and saves the health care system overall many dollars.

It's important for those who may be eligible to be notified about this opportunity. Further, everyone needs to understand that the enrollment process is not "one and done." There is an annual re-determination of eligibility and the need for persons to take full advantage of the various preventive services that they may not have ever had access to before.

Additionally, Michigan citizens change their circumstances all the time. Children age out of regular Medicaid, workers change jobs, families move into Michigan and so on. In each of these examples, individuals may then become eligible for Healthy Michigan for the first time—and not know it unless there is advocacy, awareness and encouragement for enrollment.

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We fully expect that the Legislature and the administration will have an informed discussion on the Healthy Michigan Program, its early impact and the various promotional and advertising initiatives. That is the appropriate ongoing oversight role of the Legislature, but let's not come at it with a preconceived notion that we no longer need this advocacy when it is clear to many that we do.

One has to ask why similar questions are not asked about promotion on other successful Michigan programs. Success of these programs is coupled with ongoing awareness initiatives—whether it is on filing of income tax, job training or tourism. The worse thing we can do is to tie the hands of those administering the program and not be able to reach those who need the service, and who, by using this program, become more productive and save the state health care system millions.

Successful government programs – those that provide important services or save consumers money — deserve to be promoted and grow.

Giving low-income workers whose employers do not provide health insurance need a way to access health care. That's an important service. And if government can help meet that vital need, and save consumers money at the same time, why wouldn't we want to make sure as many people as possible know about this program?

For these reasons and more, MAHP opposes SB 542. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this legislation.

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