



**HEALTH CARE
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BUSINESS, FAITH & COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE LEADERS SPEAK OUT IN SUPPORT OF HEALTH CARE REFORM

St. Louis, MO - Business, faith and community health care leaders from across the region joined together Thursday at the Family Care Health Center in St. Louis to speak in support of federal health care reform. Each speaker, representing organizations as diverse as pharmaceutical companies, faith communities, educational institutions and health care providers, shared their unique perspective on why this reform is so critical for Missouri.

"Last year, our hospitals around the country treated one uninsured patient approximately every 34 seconds, every day," said **Connie J. Brooks, Senior Director of Access Ministries at Ascension Health**. "We understand the importance of health reform, and are advocating passionately on behalf of the patients we are privileged to serve. We need health reform now."

"The uncertain economic times of late have underscored the need for immediate health care reform," said **Robert Massie, DDS, CEO of the Family Care Health Center**. "Many of our new patients, seeking access to affordable health care services, are middle class and employed or recently unemployed. These people can no longer afford the cost of private or employer-based health care insurance."

During his speech, **Edward Bryant, Director of Public Affairs at Pfizer, Inc.**, expressed why his company supports this reform. "Pfizer is actively engaged in health care reform, and we share several common goals with the Obama administration, including improving access, focusing more on prevention and wellness, and lowering costs for patients. As an innovation-based company, we want to make sure that patients have access to the new medicines, discovered by our researchers to treat and cure diseases. We will continue to be engaged in the national conversation on health care reform and are encouraged that many stake."

Edward Lawlor, Phd, Dean and the William E. Gordon Distinguished Professor at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University and Director of the school's Institute for Public Health, also pointed out the importance of federal health reform for all Americans. "Current discussions of health reform have lost sight of the big-picture - the vast numbers of people without insurance and the consequences for their health. Half of American adults put off needed health care last year because of the inadequacies of our coverage. With the

current recession, more middle class families have lost their insurance, experience catastrophic expenses, and even lost their homes due to medical expenses. Virtually everyone in American now knows someone who does not have insurance. We need to refocus on the ultimate goal – providing adequate health insurance to everyone, so we all can lead healthy, productive lives.”

Amy Blouin, Executive Director of the Missouri Budget Project, opened the event by outlining the current state of health care in Missouri. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 729,000 Missourians (13 percent of the state) were uninsured in 2007, prior to the economic recession. Uninsured Missourians are not only within low-income families or unemployed, but a growing portion of middle-income employed families are struggling to find adequate and affordable health coverage.

In addition, a growing number of Missouri families lack comprehensive health care coverage. In 2009, an estimated 25 million Americans were underinsured. These families may have health care coverage that does not provide comprehensive coverage to meet all of the health care needs for their family, excludes coverage for a pre-existing condition, or have high deductible plans.

Businesses in Missouri, particularly small businesses, are also struggling to secure affordable health coverage for their employees. In 2006, just 55.4 percent of Missouri employers offered health coverage to their employees, and only 42.4 percent of small businesses provided health coverage.

The main reason for the decline in employer-sponsored coverage is attributable to the growing cost of health care coverage. In the last decade alone, family premium costs in Missouri increased by 92 percent. In 2009, small businesses nationally will spend \$156 billion on employee health benefits and the cost is expected to more than double over ten years if health reform is not undertaken.

"As a small business owner, I have had to struggle over the past few years to meet the rising cost of health care coverage for myself and my employees," said **Eric Friedman, of Friedman Group Ltd., Realtors**. "It is critical that we enact real, meaningful health care reform as soon as possible to ensure our small business owners, and all American businesses, can continue to be competitive and support job growth in our state and nation."

Speakers at this event supporting federal health care reform included Robert Massie, DDS, CEO of Family Care Health Center; Edward Lawlor, PhD, Dean of the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University; Edward Bryant, Director of Public Affairs at Pfizer, Inc.; Rabbi Susan Talve, from the Central Reform Congregation; Connie Brooks, Senior Director of Access Ministries at Ascension Health; Eric Friedman, a small business owner from Friedman Group Ltd., Realtors; and Amy Blouin, Executive Director of the Missouri Budget Project.