



2012 Policy Priorities

Georgians for a Healthy Future is a non-profit, non-partisan health policy and advocacy organization that addresses health care issues through a consumer lens. Our 2012 policy priorities were developed with broad input from community stakeholders. We will work collaboratively with our community partners to advance these priorities.

Maximize opportunities and benefits presented by the Affordable Care Act for Georgia health care consumers. Georgians for a Healthy Future will continue to monitor legislation and agency-level activity to implement the ACA and support Georgia laws and regulations that establish structures and systems that maximize benefits for consumers in this process.

Preserve consumer protections for Georgians in private health insurance plans. State laws and regulations provide a basic level of protections and benefits to consumers who buy private health insurance plans. These protections ensure that consumers who purchase these plans obtain meaningful health insurance that covers essential medical services in the event they get sick. Georgians for a Healthy Future will continue to support efforts to preserve and strengthen consumer protections and oppose legislation that would place consumer protections at risk.

Modernize Medicaid and PeachCare by utilizing best practices to improve coverage rates, access to care, and health outcomes. The Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids programs provide health insurance for our state's most vulnerable citizens. The Georgia Department of Community Health is currently weighing options to redesign these programs. Georgians for a Healthy Future will monitor this process as well as legislative activity and will support policy changes that facilitate continuous coverage and enrollment, preserve and expand access to care, and improve health outcomes. Georgians for a Healthy Future will oppose policy changes that restrict access to vital health care services for Medicaid and PeachCare beneficiaries.

Establish a consumer-friendly health insurance exchange. A well-designed health insurance exchange can add transparency to the health insurance marketplace, spur competition and choice, help make insurance more affordable and available, and give consumers the information they need to make optimal purchasing decisions. Georgians for a Healthy Future will support a health

insurance exchange compatible with the American Health Benefit Exchanges (AHBE) authorized by the Affordable Care Act that provides consumers with the appropriate information, tools, and navigation assistance to make optimal purchasing decisions and a governance structure that can effectively and transparently oversee the exchange without conflicts of interest.

Restore child-only health insurance plans to the private health insurance market. Due to a recent change in federal law, insurance carriers in the individual market can no longer deny coverage to a child with a pre-existing condition. Even though insurers may still medically underwrite these policies, insurance carriers in Georgia stopped issuing these policies altogether. Georgians for a Healthy Future will support legislation to restore these plans to Georgia's health insurance marketplace.

Strengthen Georgia's public health system. Our public health system plays a critical role by vaccinating children, monitoring and preventing epidemics, ensuring safe food and water, and providing both clinical and community-based preventive services. Despite an increasing need for services, Georgia's per capita public health spending is among the lowest in the nation. The establishment in 2011 of the new Department of Public Health presents an opportunity to rebuild our public health infrastructure and to place renewed focus on the critical role of public health. Georgians for a Healthy Future supports a robust, adequately funded public health system to meet the critical needs of our state.

Increase the tobacco tax. The current funding environment demands evidence-based policy solutions that both advance the health of our state and generate needed revenue. In recent years, even the most basic, vital, and cost-effective programs have been subject to deep budget cuts. Georgians for a Healthy Future opposes further cuts to these vital programs and supports budget solutions such as a substantial increase in the state's tobacco tax. Tobacco taxes are a proven strategy with the dual benefit of bringing in additional state revenue and increasing the health of Georgians by reducing adult and youth smoking.