

Dear Physician:

As you know, the economic crisis has affected us all: individuals, businesses, large institutions, and the revenues of the state. Healthcare may be particularly impacted.

I want to make you aware of the Florida Hospital Association's (FHA's) efforts to address the effect the projected \$4 billion shortfall may have on Medicaid funding in our state. **[Hospital or health system name]** has joined FHA's "Coalition to Heal Florida's Healthcare" and encourages you to become involved as well. The public education campaign is being supported by a broad-based, statewide coalition of healthcare professionals, business interests, and community organizations. We are encouraging all our employees, volunteers, and donors to learn more about the effect the shortfall will have on the 45,000 Medicaid Medically Needy and Medicaid Aged/Disabled patients as well as on other Medicaid-funded services.

The goal of the Coalition is to convince the Legislature and Governor to support a \$1.00 per pack increase in the tobacco tax. If approved, the increase will provide a permanent funding source for the Medicaid Medically Needy and Medicaid Aged/Disabled programs, and fund other healthcare priorities in our state. If the Legislature does nothing, the negative impact on our patients, physician partners, **[Hospital or health system name]**, and our community could be felt for many years. The loss of these two programs will not only eliminate coverage for thousands of Floridians but will also shift the \$782 million in costs to hospitals and others.

Statistics tell us that each ten percent increase in the cost of cigarettes reduces teen smoking by approximately seven percent. Your involvement and support of the tobacco tax increase will discourage youth smoking while ensuring healthcare funding to thousands of needy recipients.

Much of the education and outreach to our legislators is being conducted through a campaign Web site: www.fha.org/coalition. Once there, visitors can learn more about the issue, sign on as an individual coalition member, tell a friend, or contact their legislator with the push of a button. As an alternative, we have template materials available for your use in the office or waiting room.

We provide a full grassroots education kit, complete with fact sheets, frequently-asked questions, brochures, and template letters for your patients. Please contact our grassroots coordinator **[name]** at **[phone number]** or **[e-mail address]** to discuss your individual needs and preferences. At the very least, consider making the attached fact sheet available to all patients in your waiting room or as they depart your office.

Each day, we see the numbers of uninsured continue to rise in our community. We must not sit back and do nothing while watching 45,000 Floridians lose healthcare coverage on July 1, 2009. Your involvement in the Coalition will increase the effectiveness of our efforts as we combine our energies to "Heal Healthcare in Florida." Please join the Coalition today! All providers know that the budget crisis could devastate healthcare in our state; now we must share that message with our legislators.

An increase in the tobacco tax will bring needed relief to 45,000 Medicaid recipients and fund other healthcare priorities. Make your voice and that of your patients heard...now. We will support you in any way we can.

Very sincerely,

[Hospital CEO signature]