



Getting a Local Resolution Adopted on Closing Virginia's Health Care Coverage Gap

Closing Virginia's Health Care Coverage gap requires demonstrating to the General Assembly that there is widespread support for addressing Virginia's health care crisis. Every city, town and county has residents who fall in that health care coverage gap. Statewide, there are 400,000 Virginians who fall in the health care coverage gap. These Virginians are people who need comprehensive health care and do not have it (and can't get it) because Virginia has not developed a plan for drawing down federal Medicaid dollars to address the health care coverage gap.

Many city, town and county officials know that they have a health care crisis. People need care and hospitals and health care facilities are struggling to provide adequate charity care. These officials know that something needs to be done, but the decision on drawing down federal Medicaid dollars for a Virginia plan to close the coverage gap is a decision that must be made by the General Assembly. But, local legislative officials can adopt resolutions calling upon the General Assembly to close Virginia's health care coverage gap by drawing down federal Medicaid dollars.

As they say, all politics is local and each community has its own approach to getting things accomplished. Consequently, the following are general guidelines for getting a local resolution adopted, but you must understand the idiosyncrasies of your locality. Late summer and the fall are good times to try to get a resolution adopted, since the local budget season is over and local governing bodies will have more time for education on an issue and to consider a resolution. You should:

Identify and convene a group of local people who are interested in closing Virginia's health care coverage gap. Include members of the VICPP chapter, faith communities, Healthcare for All Virginians coalition organizations and their members, and others committed to similar values.

Review and update the proposed resolution. Add the local specific numbers, which are available on the VICPP website in the health care section.

Develop a plan for approaching legislators. Who do you know who might sponsor such a resolution? Should you meet with multiple legislators? Do you need to organize a campaign to generate support? Are there other organizations that you need to engage in the work?

Meet with supportive legislators. Meet with legislators whom you think might sponsor the resolution. Ask their support in developing the best strategy for resolution adoption. For example, what other members should be approached for support and when? Should you also approach the mayor or county administrator to ask him/her for support and/or assistance?

Clarify the strategy and how will do what. A strategy is a plan for winning an issue in a way that will build your organization and engage your members. So, what is the plan that you think makes sense for passing the resolution? How will involve people in your group and community. What things do you need to do to pass this resolution? Meetings with other elected leaders? Letter-writing? Letters to the editor? Other. Decide how will do what to move forward the strategy.

Seek a vote on the resolution. Most of the time, you want to get a vote on your resolution, even if you might lose. If you lose, you will know who supports the resolution and who doesn't, so you can focus your energies and seek a future vote. Confirm the date the resolution will come up on the Council/Board agenda and make sure you will have plenty of supporters in the room when the resolution is being considered. Ask someone or several local people, who are directly affected, as well as the area hospital and health care providers, to speak at the meeting. Invite the press to be there.

After the vote, send thank you notes to supporters and regroup. Meet with your activists to analyze what worked and what didn't. Follow up on any opposition if unsuccessful in order to prepare for another opportunity in the coming months.