

Health Care



For All

Maryland Citizens'
Health Initiative

Health Care for All!

Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative

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July 19, 2010

Dear Maryland General Assembly Candidate:

We are writing to strongly urge you to endorse the enclosed Lorraine Sheehan Health and Community Services General Assembly Candidates' Resolution. This Resolution calls for a dime a drink increase in Maryland's alcohol taxes which have not been raised since 1972 for wine and beer, and since 1955 for spirits. Our proposal will save lives and money by reducing alcohol abuse and will fund critical state programs for health care, needs of people with developmental disabilities, mental health, and drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse. We named the Resolution after former Secretary of State, Delegate and highly regarded advocate for health care and community needs Lorraine Sheehan who passed away earlier this year.

Lorraine Sheehan, who passed away in December, 2009, was a lifelong advocate for those who suffered from a lack of health care, developmental disabilities, addictions, and mental health challenges. She was elected three times to the Maryland House of Delegates, serving on the Judiciary and Ways and Means Committees, and served as Maryland's Secretary of State for four years. Despite her battles with cystic fibrosis in her later years, she was a steadfast champion for those who were unable to advocate for themselves in the Maryland General Assembly. She is greatly missed by many. Titling this legislation in her name and memory is a fitting tribute to a person who shined as a role model for all of us to follow.

Since January of 2007, Maryland has made great public health progress by expanding health care to over 170,000 parents, children and seniors and becoming the state with the fourth lowest smoking rate in the nation. The Health Care For All! Coalition of over 1200 faith, community, labor, health care and business organizations from across the state which advocated for the measures that made this progress possible(see attached list), is now working hard for the dime a drink alcohol tax increase to build on these successes.

As you can see from the fact sheet on the back of the Resolution, a recent study by experts at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health concluded that our proposal will save hundreds of lives and hundreds of millions of dollars every year by reducing alcohol abuse. And, many thousands of Marylanders will benefit tremendously from the critical health and community programs we plan to adequately fund with the money raised by the tax.

As you can see from the attached polling done by Opinion Works (the official pollster for the Baltimore Sun), Maryland voters not only strongly support the Lorraine Sheehan proposal, they tell us they will switch party allegiances this November to support candidates who favor our dime a drink alcohol tax plan.

Plainly, signing our Resolution is good policy and good politics for you. We ask you to sign and return the Resolution to us prior to Friday, August 27, 2010. After that, we will work hard to make sure that Maryland voters know which Maryland General Assembly candidates have endorsed this life-saving plan. We will make sure that the member groups and individuals in our organizations have

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this information and we will work to educate the Maryland public across the state on this issue. We believe that, as a result, Maryland voters will elect a General Assembly committed to the Lorraine Sheehan Health Care and Community Services proposal.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you by August 27th.

Rawle Andrews Jr., Esq.
Senior State Director
AARP Maryland

Laura Carr
Lorraine Sheehan's Daughter and
Leading Maryland Disability Community
Advocate

Esther Barr
Maryland Academy of Family Physicians

Virginia Keane
American Academy of Pediatrics

Mary Beachley
Maryland Nurses Association

Pat Lippold
1199 SEIU Health Care Workers East

Vincent DeMarco
President, Maryland Citizen's Health
Initiative

Daphne McClellan
National Association of Social
Workers, Maryland Chapter

Rion Dennis
Progressive Maryland

Thomas McNutt, United Food and
Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 400

Gerald G. Stansbury
President, Maryland NAACP