

Basic health care for every Wisconsinite

When most WEAC members think about their health care benefits, they think about the cost and quality of preventative and major medical care. It follows then that with health care reform looming, every Wisconsin resident should have those same core opportunities.

Every day our teachers and ESP have first-hand experience with children and families who lack health care. Our teachers and ESP witness how untreated illnesses interfere with children's learning and overall well-being.

Uninsured children are more likely to have social and emotional development problems that affect their learning. Children in families without insurance are far more likely to miss school, or have difficulties fully participating in school.

By 2016, Wisconsin residents will have to spend close to \$25,000, or more than 46 percent of the median household income, to buy health insurance for themselves and their family. This comes at the same time health insurance premiums across the state are rising considerably faster than workers' earnings. From 2000 to 2007, family health insurance premiums for Wisconsin's workers rose 4.8 times more quickly than median earnings.

It's not just school families who have critical health insurance problems. Many ESP don't have health insurance and those who have it worry about losing it. Many ESP pay a high percentage of their paycheck toward health insurance, and health insurance is the No. 1 issue on bargaining surveys.

Many ESP are seeing significant, and often cost-prohibitive, increases in the contribution they make toward their health care premiums. Due to this, ESP can't afford to take health insurance.

Most ESP contracts have minimum hourly requirements to qualify for health care. Some districts are cutting hours and not filling positions from which people who qualified for health insurance leave or retire.

One of the principles adopted by the WEAC Board related to health care reform is that **every Wisconsin resident should have access to preventive, diagnostic, routine and catastrophic care.**

For WEAC members, this means removing from the local bargaining table what members consider their basic coverage and making it available to everyone in the state under a government plan.

To get involved in the informational campaign regarding health care, e-mail healthcare@weac.org for e-alerts and share your story by sending it to shareyourstory@weac.org.

For more information about health care reform, visit www.weac.org/healthcare.