

PRESS RELEASE

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CCHC's "Tax on Patients" Poster To Be Distributed Statewide by Health Care Groups

St. Paul, Minnesota – Although the MinnesotaCare provider tax has raised the cost of health care in Minnesota by more than \$1.1 billion, few Minnesotans are aware of the tax, or the extent of its collection for purposes beyond the MinnesotaCare subsidy program.

"No tax should be hidden from the public. Increasing public awareness about the existence and cost of the tax, as well as how few of the dollars have been used for the subsidy program, is key to having a frank discussion on the value of the tax," says Twila Brase, R.N., president of CCHC.

To expand public awareness, Citizens' Council on Health Care (CCHC) has initiated the Provider Tax Education 2001 Project. A poster depicting the tax as a "Tax on Patients" will be distributed by Minnesota health care organizations for display in the offices of health care professionals around the state. It will include telephone numbers for contacting state officials, legislators, and Governor Ventura.

Several Minnesota health care professional organizations have signed on to the project, agreeing to distribute it to their membership through publications:

- The Minnesota Chiropractic Association - *Membership Memo* newsletter
- The Minnesota Dental Association – Membership newsletter
- The Minnesota Medical Association – *Minnesota Medicine* magazine/web site
- The Minnesota Optometric Association - web site and email announcement
- The Minnesota Podiatric Association - Quarterly membership newsletter

The 1992 law that created the tax initially kept doctors from including the tax on billing statements. The prohibition was repealed after a successful court challenge, allowing doctors to itemize the tax for patients, but many HMO contracts continue to require that doctors and hospitals exclude the tax from patient bills.

"The willingness of professional organizations to join us in this project is extraordinary, and greatly appreciated. At a time when organizational resources are scarce and repeal of the tax seems unlikely in 2002, Minnesota's health care leaders have agreed to look forward into the future. As the public becomes better educated on the provider tax, ten years of bad policy could be reversed. Individuals across the state will suddenly realize that this is actually a tax on patients not doctors. And further more, that it not only increases the cost of health care but it also limits access to health care services."

"We have suggested that practitioners place the "Tax on Patients" poster on the back of exam room doors, frame and display it on reception desks and in waiting rooms, and place it on organization web sites," says Brase. She is also suggesting that doctors regularly send the poster and contact numbers as a flyer in their billing statements to patients.

CCHC released an extensive report about the legislative and financial history of the tax at a press conference in February 2000: *Distribution, Utilization and Impact of the MinnesotaCare Provider Tax*. The report points out, and the poster reiterates, that between 1993 and 1998, only \$250.6 million of \$622.2 million collected was spent on health care services for MinnesotaCare patients. Collections were nearly two and one-half times the cost of care.

The Poster can be found online at: http://www.cchc-mn.org/pdfs/provider_tax_poster.pdf

For the Executive Summary of the CCHC report:

<http://www.cchconline.org/publications/providertaxsumm.php3>

CCHC is an independent non-profit health care policy organization located in St. Paul, Minnesota.