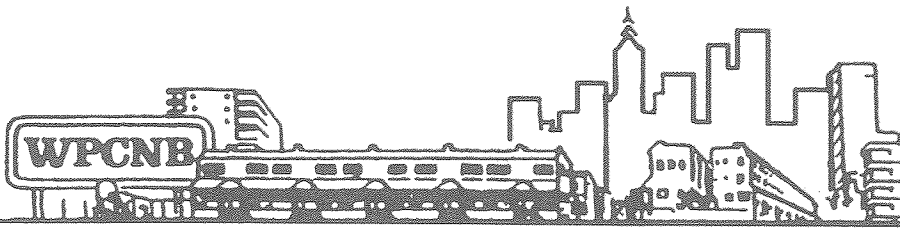


WEST PHILADELPHIA COALITION OF NEIGHBORHOODS AND BUSINESSES



4601 Market Street
First Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19139
(215) 476-0400

Lee B. Tolbert
President

June 2, 2008

To the Editor:

As lawmakers and Governor Rendell debate proposals to increase healthcare access for more Pennsylvanians, it is ironic that the state budget proposal for next year contains a recommendation that would limit access to quality care for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

I am referring to the Department of Public Welfare's (DPW) proposal for the Medical Assistance (Medicaid) program. DPW has proposed to take over the delivery of pharmacy services by carving this service out of the managed care system. Medicaid, essentially an insurance program for needy Americans, enrolls almost two million men, women, and children in Pennsylvania. Because taxpayers ultimately pay for this program, we all have a stake in its success. As President of the West Philadelphia Coalition of Neighborhoods and Businesses (the Coalition), I am particularly concerned about the impact on our constituents if DPW's proposal is successful.

The Coalition is a community-based, nonprofit, umbrella organization whose members consist of community-based organizations, churches, businesses, and institutions. Our service area consists of all of West and Southwest Philadelphia and includes many families who are on low or fixed incomes and, therefore, depend on Medicaid for their health needs. The zip codes in our service area reflect some of the highest incidences of chronic illnesses, including HIV/AIDS, asthma, and behavioral and mental health issues.

Many Medicaid consumers require a highly coordinated level of care. Under managed care, Medicaid consumers receive all of their care in an integrated fashion: primary care physician visits, specialty care, and pharmaceuticals. DPW's plans for the next budget, unfortunately, would make it more difficult for Medicaid patients enrolled in managed care programs to access that coordinated care.

It makes no sense to force patients to use two different insurance systems. More importantly, it makes no sense to tear apart a system that is working. In fact, DPW's proposal reminds many healthcare professionals of the Medicare Part D debacle.

DPW's goal is to save money, but this pharmacy carve-out is bad healthcare policy. It is not fair to balance the state budget on the backs of our most needy citizens by jeopardizing their ability to access high-quality healthcare.

On behalf of the Coalition and the families we represent who depend on Medicaid for their health needs, I urge lawmakers to reject DPW's proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lee B. Tolbert". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lee B. Tolbert