



## Massachusetts Public Health Association Principles for a Universal Health Care System

Affirming that health care is an internationally recognized human right, and in furtherance of its mission to improve the public's health, promote the establishment of health care as a human right, and promote optimal community, personal and environmental health, the Massachusetts Public Health Association endorses the following principles to guide development of a universal health care system:

### 1. Health care services are an essential component of an effective public health system.

- A strong public health infrastructure at all levels of government is the foundation for protecting the health of the public.
- Health care services complement and do not supplant public health services to *prevent* injury and disease.
- Health care services may be provided through a combination of insurance and population-based public health programs and services.
- Health education and health policy must encourage individual, community, and corporate behaviors that promote health.

### 2. Access to health care insurance and services must be universal.

- Health care services must be available to everyone living in Massachusetts, regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship, language, culture, location, employment, income, assets, physical or mental ability or preexisting conditions.
- Health care insurance must be portable, continuous, and easy to obtain and maintain.
- The organization, staffing, delivery, and payment for health services must be non-discriminatory and culturally competent to address the needs of all populations.

### 3. Health care services must be comprehensive and equitable.

- A program of essential health services must be available for everyone, without regard for ability to pay.
- Essential health services include preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, rehabilitative, palliative, and health maintenance services for all types of illnesses, injuries, and acute and chronic conditions.
- Essential health services include but are not limited to medical and dental care, mental health and substance abuse services, disease screening and prevention, reproductive health services, community-based outreach and education, and access to prescription drugs, medical devices, and support services required for people to effectively utilize the health system.

### 4. Health care services must be affordable, cost effective, and sustainable.

- Cost control in the health system requires investment in the prevention of illness and injury.
- Health care services must be supported by a publicly accountable financing structure with unified billing.
- Costs for health care services must be based on ability to pay.
- Administrative and marketing costs must be minimized, and financing must offer fair payment to providers for the actual costs of comprehensive health services.

### 5. Health care services should enhance health and well being by promoting access to high-quality care that promotes dignity and is effective, safe, and timely.

- Health system administration must include incentives and safeguards to assure appropriate utilization and the highest quality care and services.
- Confidentiality of personal medical information must be respected.
- Individuals must have choice over where and from whom they receive health services.
- Training and employment practices must ensure a diverse health workforce at all levels to eliminate health disparities and promote access.