

Colorado Health Care Poll Press Conference Talking Points

Dr. Joan Bothner, Children's Hospital

Opening Remarks / Welcome

Dr. Martha Middlemist, President, Colorado AAP

Good Morning. I am, Dr. Martha Middlemist, President of the Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and a pediatrician in private practice at Pediatrics Denver Tech-Center.

The Colorado Chapter of the AAP joined the Colorado Medical Society in commissioning this poll in an attempt to understand where Colorado's voting public placed children's health care as a priority for state policy makers. The results surprised even us in that there was clear and resounding response, across a broad range of socio-economic populations, to Put Colorado Children First.

Our poll confirms what every doctor who treats children would hope every parent should fervently believe: That all children should have health insurance, so they get the right care at the right place at the right time. Colorado voters have made it very clear through this poll that they are ready for Colorado to Put Children First.

Voters stated their desire to Put Colorado Children First with the following points:

- *Voters identified improving the health, education, and safety of children as the most important issue for the state and federal government to address. This was ranked above the economy & jobs, immigration, homeland security, care for seniors, taxes and transportation issues.*
- *Overall, 90% of voters say that children's issues will be important to them when they vote, including a sizeable majority, 60%, who say that children's issues will be very important in their voting decisions.*
- *If their parents are unable to afford other coverage, 73% of voters believe that every child in Colorado should be covered by a government-supported health care.*

These poll results prioritizing children's wellbeing are in stark contrast to the current status of children's health care in Colorado. A very recent study by my colleagues at The Children's Hospital paint a bleak picture: Even kids enrolled in Colorado Medicaid can't find a pediatrician, and both they and children without any coverage are at a significantly higher risk of getting sick, staying sick. For more detailed information on these findings, a summary of this study is provided in your media packet.

It has been well publicized that Colorado has ranked poorly in recent years in terms of immunizing our young children. The link between insurance coverage and children getting the necessary health care services they need, such as immunizations, is evident in the astonishing number of Colorado infants and toddlers hospitalized for diseases that a vaccine would have prevented. In far too many instances, in numbers far beyond those of their insured cohorts, children will not make it out of the hospital. This isn't just tragic. It is also preventable. We have the resources to make this right. And now, perhaps, the political will.

As a pediatrician, I am heartened by this extraordinary measure of public support for what we as doctors consider just plain common sense. We and our colleagues across the medical profession are united in our resolve to turn this public support into the political will to take action for children in the next session of the Colorado Legislature.