



Support Diversity and Expand Access to Health Care: Support Plus One!

July 16, 2009

At Citizens Project we know that not all families are identical, and we believe it's time that our city's health benefits policy reflect that diversity. It's also time for Colorado Springs to catch up with the 22 cities in Colorado, as well as the state government, that have expanded health benefits for families.

What is Plus One?

Citizens Project is proposing a Plus One employee benefits policy for our city government - including Memorial Hospital and Colorado Springs Utilities - that allows every employee to add one qualifying family member to their health insurance plan. The proposal -- being put together with the help of dozens of community volunteers and supporters -- will reach out to even more people than a standard domestic partner benefits plan because it could include an adult child or a parent living with the employee. Because the family would pay the full premium, health insurance specialists have said such a plan will likely not cost taxpayers a dime.

Valuing Public Servants at No Additional Cost

With the city making deep budget cuts due to falling revenue, our dedicated city employees are seeing their hours cut and workloads increased. This plan would send a message that our community values and appreciates city employees by expanding benefits without increasing the cost to taxpayers. When a similar proposal was brought up six years ago, two insurance benefits specialists agreed that the eligible population under this plan would not increase the risk for raising health costs on participants. Proponents expect this new plan to get the same endorsement. The plan is designed so that only true dependent family members will qualify, and those 65 and older who are eligible for Medicare would not be included under Plus One. In addition, this policy could reduce the cost of uncompensated care at the city's Memorial Hospital by reducing the number of uninsured and under-insured in our community. That will SAVE taxpayer dollars.

Celebrating Diversity and Promoting Economic Growth

An added benefit of enacting the Plus One policy is it sends a clear message that our community welcomes diversity and has a place for everyone. That's why so many large, successful employers offer expanded benefits (85% of Fortune 100 companies as of January 2009). Fostering diversity creates a favorable environment that promotes economic development and makes Colorado Springs a more attractive place for companies looking to relocate. Our community has garnered bad publicity for intolerance and the Plus One plan would help dispel that reputation.

Help Pass Plus One

Citizens Project needs your help to make this happen! Five City Council members have said they would support the plan as long as it does not increase costs, but we want the others to support it, too. There are many ways to help, including:

- Write letters to the editor and call City Council members to support the plan. It will make a difference! (contact info below)

- Post a status update on your Facebook page and Tweet your support on Twitter.
- Help with community outreach. We are presenting the proposal to community groups and stakeholders and need your help to reach everyone. Who do we need to talk to? Send your ideas to Executive Director Barb Van Hoy at barb@citizensproject.org.
- Join the Plus One Task Force to help with research and logistics. Email Barb Van Hoy.
- Subscribe to Citizens Project's Activist Network to receive action alerts about the proposal. Also follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

We hope it will come before the City Council in August, so watch your inbox!

Make Your Voice Heard!

Gazette Letters to the Editor: Opinion@gazette.com

Independent Letters to the Editor: letters@csindy.com

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