

October 31, 2016

I am Kathryn Franklin, President of the Suburban Primary Health Care Council and Access to Care. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today and thank you for your ongoing support of the Access to Care program.

As you may know, Access to Care is a non-profit primary health care program for low income, uninsured and under insured residents of suburban Cook County and northwest Chicago. Approximately one in fifteen residents of Cook County remain uninsured and many of them are the most vulnerable because they are not eligible for other services.

Access to Care was designed to make use of the existing private health care infrastructure in order to better serve the geographically dispersed Cook County residents in their own communities. Private physicians volunteer their time to see, in their own offices, members of the Access to Care program. Once Cook County residents sign up for Access to Care at any one of 57 local intake sites or enroll by mail they are assigned a physician in their own community. We are generally able to match patients with a physician who speaks their primary language when it is other than English. We also contract with local commercial labs such as Quest and LabCorp and with Walgreens pharmacies for these services, so again, members are able to get these services close to their own homes.

Once enrolled in Access to Care, individuals may see their doctor an unlimited number of times for only a \$5 co-payment per visit. They may also get an unlimited number of routine lab and radiology services, also for a \$5 co-payment per procedure and an unlimited number of prescriptions filled for a \$15-\$40 co-payment per prescription.

Access to Care is very cost efficient. Ninety two cents of every dollar contributed to Access to Care goes to direct program services. We are able to provide an unlimited number of physician office visits, lab tests, x-rays and prescription drugs for an annual cost of only \$786 per person in 2016.

This year, we will serve approximately 6,000 residents of suburban Cook County and northwest Chicago. Many of these Access to Care members will have gone years without seeing a physician before joining our program. We see a much higher rate of chronic illness in the population we serve than found in the general public. Often these conditions have been neglected for years. The most frequent diagnoses are hypertension and diabetes. Because we hear so many stories about the dire effects diabetes has caused, the Access to Care staff and I strongly support a tax on sugary beverages.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today and for your continued support of the Access to Care program.

Suburban Primary Health Care Council*

* A not-for-profit organization founded by: the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County, Inc.; the Cook County Department of Public Health; the Northwest Suburban Cook County Health Care Task force; and the Park Forest Health Department.

A United Way Agency