

Good Evening. My name is Dan Engel, and I am here as a member of the Access to Care Board. I want to thank you for your generous support of the Access to Care program and to ask you to continue to fund Access to Care in the 2019 budget.

As the retired Senior Deputy General Counsel for Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, I have spent my working life in the fields of health care and health care coverage. I have also been honored throughout my career to be able to represent many of those in need of voluntary legal services. Now, in retirement, serving on the Access to Care Board gives me the opportunity to work for an organization that allows some of the most disadvantaged among us to get health care that they would not otherwise have received and then, in turn, to lead more productive lives.

Importantly, many of Access to Care's members need care to avoid the kinds of chronic illnesses that would prevent them from continuing to support their families. Many others, however, are chronically ill when they sign up for Access to Care. They are often unable to work or to work regularly due to their illness. They are not able to take care of and provide for their loved ones in the way they need and would like. This inability provides further stress on their families, which, ironically, exacerbates their medical conditions. But once they have, through Access to Care, a physician and can receive appropriate care and care management, they are often able to remain productive, contributing members of society.

Access to Care members are assigned to a participating primary health care provider in their community; they can see this provider as many times as they need to for a \$5 co-payment per visit. Members also have routine lab tests and x-rays for a \$5 co-payment and their prescriptions covered for a \$15 co-pay for generics and a \$30 co-pay for brand-name medications. All Access to Care members are low-income and are not eligible for County Care or Medicare. Access to Care fills the gap mainly for the uninsured, and also for many under-insured, in suburban Cook County and northwest Chicago.

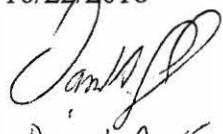
Access to Care provides routine, primary health care to these Cook County residents for only \$650 per person a year! This is accomplished in part through the generosity of health care providers, who provide greatly discounted services to Access to Care members.

We at Access to Care recognize that if patients do not receive care for their chronic conditions, their health worsens until they ended up in the emergency room, sometimes multiple times a year, requiring lengthy and expensive hospital stays. Through our program, we seek to avoid these outcomes, both for the benefit of our members and to help reduce or even eliminate much of the uncompensated care experienced by the County.

Access to Care provides a meaningful example of how the people of Cook County truly care about the disadvantaged among us. We who work at Access to Care want to share our own good fortune with those who must not be left behind. We hope and believe that you share this desire and urge you to please continue funding this essential program at the same level as the 2018 budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.

10/22/2018

  
Daniel A. Engel