



**Ohio Primary Care in Crisis:  
Breaking Beneath the Strain of a  
Fractured Healthcare System**



*Primary care physician practices are small businesses in crisis. Payment from private and government payers is flat or declining while office overhead expenses (caused by increased administrative burdens, the cost of employees' salaries/benefits and professional liability insurance premiums) continue to grow. In the absence of a system that supports primary care, inefficient and expensive care is provided to those who can afford it while everyone else falls through the cracks.*

## **Something Has to Be Done!**

- The growing ranks of uninsured patients mean more and more Ohioans rarely receive preventive services or ongoing care for chronic conditions.
- Reimbursement rates are flat or declining while expenses continue to increase. Medicaid payments for physicians have not been raised since 2000.
- Due to government and managed care payment caps, physicians cannot raise their fees to recoup the inflationary cost of doing business.
- Facing average educational debts of \$150,000 or more at graduation, medical students are bypassing primary care careers for more lucrative specialties.

## **Ohio Medicaid Provides a Health Care Safety Net to 1.88 Million Ohioans; Medicaid...**

- Covers one out of every six Ohioans.
- Covers one out of every three children (954,776 children from infants up to age 19).
- Covers one in every five seniors aged 85 or over in Ohio.
- Pays for one in every three births in Ohio.

Declining reimbursement rates combined with increasing practice expenses means that fewer physicians can afford to see low-income patients, since Medicaid payments for physicians have not been raised since 2000. *Source: Ohio Hospital Association, Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, Kaiser Family Foundation*

## **Ohio's Economy Needs a Healthy and Productive Workforce**

- In markets where primary care physicians provide the majority of care, patients are healthier and costs are lower.
- Unhealthy workers, whether absent or present at work, cost employers real dollars in lost productivity.
- Primary care physicians help detect and treat health issues early before they become serious illnesses that are much more expensive to treat.
- Studies show populations with a higher primary care physician-to-specialist ratio result in lower mortality rates and lower costs. *Source: The Effects of Specialist Supply on Populations' Health: Assessing the Evidence, Health Affairs*
- States that rely more on primary care than specialty care for the treatment of patients with

chronic illnesses have lower healthcare spending and better quality outcomes. *Source: The Effects of Specialist*

*Supply on Populations' Health: Assessing the Evidence, Health Affairs*

## **As Advocates for Our Patients, We Believe...**

- All Ohioans deserve access to high quality, safe and efficient primary care.
- All Ohioans need a Medical Home led by a primary care physician, who coordinates and manages that care.
- Ohio needs primary care physicians who emphasize disease prevention and wellness resulting in:
  - Improved health outcomes
  - Lower mortality rates
  - Reduced emergency room visits
  - Decreased rate of preventable hospital admissions
  - Less invasive, lower cost care
  - Higher patient satisfaction.

## **Investing in Primary Care Saves Taxpayer Dollars**

- Revitalize the Medicaid physician network, improve access and provide cost-effective care by assuring that primary care payment rates are competitive.
- Improve access to early prenatal care and quality delivery services for better birth outcomes and save \$3 for every \$1 invested. *Source: ODJFS Medicaid Report, 1995*
- Invest in protecting and strengthening the State Children's Insurance Program (SCHIP) by

enrolling all eligible Ohioans and maximizing the use of federal matching dollars.

- Ensure an adequate primary care physician base by increasing Medicaid reimbursement to 100 percent of Medicare.
- Provide financial incentives to implement health information technology in physicians' offices.
- Stabilize professional liability insurance rates through continued patient safety initiatives and insurance reform.

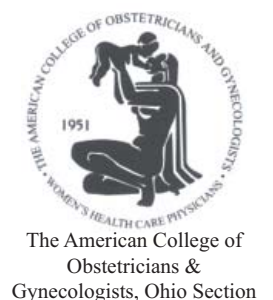
## **Investing in Primary Care Medical Education Guarantees A Healthy Future for All Ohioans**

- Enhance clinical teaching budget lines for Ohio's medical schools.
- Expand the availability of medical loan repayment programs to those physicians who provide primary care in areas of need.
- Reward those who select primary care specialties through loan forgiveness programs. Primary care physicians tend to distribute themselves to areas of greater need in larger numbers than do physicians in other specialties. *Source: The Robert Graham Center*



# Ohio Coalition of Primary Care Physicians

Representing more than 15,000 current and future primary care physicians who serve on the front lines of medicine providing care to the citizens of Ohio.



Ohio Chapter, American College of Physicians  
Ohio State Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians