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Strickland Announces Program to Review Comprehensive Health Care Reforms for Ohio

Columbus, Ohio – Ohio Governor Ted Strickland today announced the state of Ohio was selected to participate in the 2007 Coverage Institute sponsored by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s State Coverage Initiatives (SCI) program. Ohio was one of 14 states selected for the program.

“In the budget we extended access to healthcare to every uninsured child in Ohio, but that was just the first step,” Strickland said. “We now must move forward in a bipartisan way to develop a comprehensive plan to make affordable health coverage available to all of Ohio’s uninsured; to improve the cost, quality and efficiency of Ohio’s health care system; and to improve the health of all Ohioans.”

The SCI program assists states who are considering systematic “substantial and comprehensive health reform” to develop and implement policies that will expand access to health care for the entire uninsured population in a state by expanding public programs and private sector reforms. The program will assist the state in considering a spectrum of health care reforms, while helping state officials to understand the implications of those reforms and how they affect existing systems.

SCI will work with a team of Ohio policy, legislative and stakeholder participants to facilitate discussion of reform options for the state and will assist in modeling and implementing those options.

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The Ohio SCI team members are:

- Janetta King, policy director for Governor Ted Strickland
- Cristal Thomas, Ohio Medicaid director and director of the Office of Ohio Health Plans
- Cynthia Burnell, director of the Office of Healthy Ohio
- Doug Anderson, assistant director of health coverage policy at the Ohio Department of Insurance
- Rep. Jim Raussen, state representative from Ohio's 28th House District
- Rep. Sandra Williams, state representative from Ohio's 11th House District
- Sen. Tom Niehaus, state senator from Ohio's 14th Senate District
- Sen. Shirley Smith, state senator from Ohio's 21st Senate District
- Nick Lashutka, director of external relations for the Ohio Business Roundtable
- William D. Hayes, president of the Health Policy Institute of Ohio
- John Charles Barrant, Ph.D, health systems division director, Service Employees International Union District 1199
- Col Owens, senior attorney for the legal aid society of Southwest Ohio

“The SCI program is an opportunity to bring together leaders of the administration and legislature and various stakeholders to thoroughly discuss our current situation, the system we would like to see in Ohio and innovative ways in which we can create that system with an effective and comprehensive plan,” Strickland said.

The SCI Coverage Institute program will begin in late September/early October with an initial meeting that will bring together SCI staff, national experts and technical assistance to work with the Ohio SCI team as they develop and discuss Ohio's reform plans. SCI will also provide follow-up and technical assistance, including background research, on-site consultant visits, telephone consultations and other means of support, in an on-going basis without additional costs throughout the Institute.

Two additional meetings will take place with SCI staff and the Ohio SCI team, one in July or August of 2008 and the other at the end of the process in the Spring of 2009. Both meetings will focus on progress the state has made, modeling and other activities the state engaged in throughout the process.

Ohio's participation in the SCI Coverage Institute is part of a larger effort to engage stakeholders and the public in a process to develop an effective and comprehensive plan to cover Ohio's uninsured residents, improve the health of all Ohioans and improve the business climate in the state. Led by the Ohio SCI team, a larger advisory group is being established which includes consumer advocates and leaders from Ohio's health care and coverage system, to help guide the development of reforms. Stakeholders and the public will be kept informed of the progress of these efforts and will have input into the development of reforms.