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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ensuring everyone knows health care options

New data released on Sept. 20 reveals that Bridgeport has the unfortunate distinction of having the highest number of residents with no health insurance of any city in Connecticut. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey, an estimated 23.4 percent of people in Bridgeport lack health care coverage (compared to 9.1 percent statewide).

Our children aren't faring much better — an estimated 8.5 percent of Bridgeport children under the age of 18 are uninsured (compared to 3.8 percent statewide). In fact, Fairfield County as a whole lags behind every other county in Connecticut in the rate of children who have health insurance. Statewide, the picture is also discouraging as the number of children without coverage actually rose from 2011 to 2012 by 7,000 (despite increased enrollment in the state's HUSKY health care program).

Quality, affordable health care is one of the most basic building blocks to a child's development. Good physical, mental, and oral health is not only a right in and of itself, but is requisite to a child being able to thrive in other areas of his or her life, including in school. The ability of parents to obtain good health care coverage and care is also vital to the health and development of children. Studies show that when parents have health insurance, children are more likely to see a doctor. And healthy parents make for better caretakers.

This data highlights the importance of the federal Affordable Care Act and state programs like HUSKY and Access Health CT, which will expand coverage to thousands more Connecticut children and families. Starting next month, organizations around the state will be working hard to make sure that fewer people fall between

the cracks. These organizations, in partnership with Access Health CT, will be conducting outreach to a broad cross-section of people in our cities and towns to make sure that everyone knows what their new health care options are and that fewer go uninsured.

As a participating organization, we are eager to get started. Having helped hundreds of children and adults enroll in HUSKY over the last few years, we know how many families in the Greater Bridgeport area are under the (often false) assumption that they don't qualify for coverage — and how much of a difference it makes to their overall health and well-being when they do.

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