

Press Release
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Bar Harbor to Host Rural Health Forum

Bar Harbor, ME-- The Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce, The MDI Hospital, and the League of Woman Voters – Downeast are co-hosting the **Rural Health Forum**, featuring Keynote speaker, **Governor John E. Baldacci**, along with **Trish Riley, Director of Governor's Office of Health, Policy and Finance**.

The forum will be held on Monday, May 19, from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm at the Regency Hotel in Bar Harbor. In addition to Governor Baldacci and Ms. Riley, the forum will include a discussion among panelists including, Dana Conners, President of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce; Joe Ditré, Executive Director of Consumers for Affordable Health Care; and representatives from the MDI Community Health Plan.

This forum will address the business community and consumers of Mount Desert Island and Downeast Maine at this most crucial time when health care costs are driving small family businesses out of the State. Many small business owners simply cannot provide insurance for themselves or their employees.

Many business owners and other consumers have no insurance or they just hold onto catastrophic insurance to save their livelihoods in case of emergency. In Maine, 142,000 residents are without health insurance. Those who can afford it are experiencing average increases of 25-50% yearly in health care costs. Providing emergency care to the uninsured affects the financial stability of our community hospitals and contributes to rising insurance costs for private payers.

The study of the health care crisis in Maine has been ongoing for many years. It's not a simple problem with any simple solutions. At best, it's a multitude of problems with far reaching and surprising connections to most of what we hold dear in Maine. We can neither sustain the present system nor tolerate its widespread impact. This is the defining topic of our time.

Come be a part of the discussion about the future of Maine's health care on May 19th. Registration is open to the public, but space is limited. For more information about how to register please call the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce at 288-5103.