



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Georgia Watch receives grant to examine access to care, community benefits throughout the state

ATLANTA – Georgia Watch announces today the expansion of its Hospital Accountability Project to help broaden accessibility to affordable, quality health care for uninsured, underinsured and low-income Georgians by addressing socioeconomic obstacles, hospital policies, community benefits and regulations throughout the state.

In 2009, the organization received a two-year grant to focus specifically on the metropolitan Atlanta area, examining the particular barriers to affordable care uninsured, underinsured and low-income consumers face. Through research, partnerships with community organizations, and hospital and consumer engagement, Georgia Watch has analyzed these barriers, and will release their findings in a report in spring 2010.

With this new funding, Georgia Watch will magnify its previous efforts to examine hospitals and communities in the state. Through research and analysis, the publication of relevant reports, the engagement of the state's hospitals, and education and empowerment of the state's consumers, Georgia Watch aims to increase access to appropriate, quality health care by enacting state-level regulations, advocating hospital policy changes and promoting consumer empowerment. The organization will also actively engage key state-level stakeholders, hospital representatives, community leaders and lawmakers in dialogue on these topics.

"Through the Metropolitan Atlanta Hospital Accountability Project, we've been able to analyze and evaluate the real issues uninsured, underinsured and low-income area consumers face, and promote changes that will, hopefully, help eliminate those barriers," **Georgia Watch Hospital Accountability Project Director Holly Lang said.** "However, as it has developed, we've realized there is an urgent need for this type of work on a state-wide level."

The expanded program will focus on several smaller metropolitan areas – Albany, Augusta, Gainesville, Macon, Rome, Savannah, Thomasville, Tifton and Valdosta – as Georgia Watch is already examining facilities within the metropolitan Atlanta area through our current grant. Georgia Watch will primarily focus on safety net facilities and hospital systems in these regions, as well as issues of affordability as they relate to fiscal and financial health in those regions.

The Hospital Accountability Project is funded in part by a grant from Healthcare Georgia Foundation. Created in 1999 as an independent, private foundation, the Foundation's mission is to advance the health of all Georgians and to expand access to affordable, quality healthcare for underserved individuals and communities.

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Founded in 2002, Georgia Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501-(c)(3) watchdog group focusing on consumer education and research in the areas of health care, insurance, identity theft, consumer energy issues and personal finance. Visit www.GeorgiaWatch.org for more information.