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Florida Decides Healthcare Seeks Administrative Fix on Petition Collection Procedure

Tallahassee, FL – Since the launch of their campaign on February 1, 2024, Florida Decides Healthcare, the sponsor of a ballot initiative to expand Medicaid eligibility in Florida, has engaged with thousands of voters across the state collecting petitions to place this measure on the ballot in 2026. Thousands of Floridians have signed petitions seeking to make their voices heard by placing Medicaid expansion on the ballot through the citizen initiative process, as guaranteed by the Florida Constitution.

Throughout this process, Florida Decides Healthcare followed all applicable rules, statutes, and relevant precedents while collecting petitions, including those established under [Rule 1S-2.009](#) of the Florida Administrative Code. This rule states that “For volunteer petition circulators, any petition form approved by the Secretary of State prior to the effective date of this rule may continue to be used and circulated for signature gathering unless a material change” was made to the form, such as “a change in the wording of the text of the proposed amendment, the ballot title, or ballot summary, or a change in punctuation or layout, or a change in the name of the sponsoring political committee.” This rule was established following passage of SB 1794 in 2020, which shortened the time period that signatures were valid.

However, on August 8, 2024, the Florida Department of State issued new guidance concerning this rule, stating “an initiative petition signed by a voter who previously signed the same petition in a prior election cycle where the sponsor unsuccessfully sought ballot position is not valid with the same serial number if the previously signed petition was verified as valid. If a sponsor wanted to use the same pool of voters in making another attempt, it would need to submit a new petition for approval and assignment of a new serial number.”

For the more than 80,000 Florida voters who signed the Florida Decides Healthcare initiative petition in a previous election cycle, and had their signatures expire, this would mean they could not renew their support to put this initiative on the 2026 ballot. Were this bureaucratic interpretation to hold, the only way the voices of these longtime supporters could be heard would be by throwing out the thousands of petitions signed by new supporters and starting over—resulting in confusion, as duplicative competing petitions circulated the state.

“From Day One of this campaign, our goal has been to lift up the voices of Floridians who felt like they have been left out of the political process as they struggled to gain access to healthcare in our state,” stated **Florida Decides Healthcare Campaign Manager Jake Flaherty**. “As we have engaged with voters across the state, we have heard time and again how important it is that the people of Florida are given the opportunity to make this decision for themselves directly by placing Medicaid expansion on the ballot in 2026. We remain committed to ensuring that all Floridians have the opportunity to participate fully in shaping the future of healthcare in our state.”

At this time, Florida Decides Healthcare continues to work with the state on a resolution, including exploring all options regarding potential legal challenges, which would ensure that no voter is disenfranchised throughout this process.

“The Florida Constitution guarantees citizens the right to participate in the citizen initiative process, and the state’s new guidance puts that right at risk,” stated **ACLU of Florida Legal Director Daniel Tilley**. “We are simply advocating for a fair and consistent application of the rules governing the citizen initiative process, and we look forward to a resolution that upholds the Florida Constitution and the rights of every eligible voter to make their voice heard in our state.”

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Florida Decides Healthcare is a political committee dedicated to securing affordable, high-quality healthcare for over 1.4 million Floridians. With a non-partisan coalition at its core, the organization is focused on amending Florida's Constitution to expand Medicaid, championing healthcare rights for Florida's working families.