

March 20, 2006

Dear Interested Person:

On April 11th, Spokane area residents will have a rare opportunity to share their best ideas about health policy directly with the Washington State Board of Health—and to comment on the proposed 2006 State Health Report. A panel of local experts will also discuss health disparities in Spokane County. I am writing as chair of the Board to invite you to attend, and to encourage you to spread the word about this important event.

Are you concerned about the skyrocketing costs of medical care? Are you worried about the quality of care you receive—or having difficulties just getting in to see a doctor? Do you know a child who doesn't have health insurance and is going without regular checkups? Do you wonder why some groups in your community seem to be less healthy than others? Do you question whether public health has enough resources to protect the community in the event of a health emergency such as a flu pandemic? Do you have great ideas you want to share about how to improve the medical care and public health systems? If so, this is your chance to share you concerns and recommend solutions.

The Public Forum on State Health Policy will be held **Tuesday, April 11, 4:00-6:30 p.m., at the Public Health Center, 1101 West College Avenue, Spokane**. The event is being co-hosted by the Spokane Regional Health District. Members of the Governor's policy staff will be on hand at the forum, and representatives of other state agencies have been invited. Light refreshments will be served.

A panel of local community members will discuss what is known about health disparities in Spokane County and what can be done to eliminate them (health disparities are measurable differences in health outcomes experienced by different populations).

The Board will consider public input gathered from this meeting and others like it when it prepares the final draft of the 2006 State Health Report for the Governor's consideration. The report, which is meant to guide legislative and budget requests by state health agencies, comes out every two years, but public forums happen once every five years.

For more information, visit the Board's Web site at www.sboh.wa.gov, or call the Spokane Regional Health District at (509) 234-1501. A discussion draft of the 2006 State Health Report can be obtained after April 1 by visiting the Board's Web site or calling the Board's offices at (360) 236-4110. Copies will also be available at the public forum.

The State Board of Health provides statewide leadership in advancing policies that protect and improve the public's health. It does this by reviewing and monitoring the health status of all people in Washington; analyzing policies, providing guidance, and developing rules; promoting system partnerships; and encouraging public engagement in the public health system.

Sincerely,



Kim Marie Thorburn, MD, MPH
Chair, Washington State Board of Health