FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 6, 2020

Contact: Joe Shields, 973-270-7615
joe@ninaforpa.com

Dr. Nina Ahmad Unveils Broad Strategy on Improving Health Care
Plan Details Ways to Engage Pennsylvania Auditor General’s Office to Quickly Improve Access and Set Course to Universal Coverage Amid COVID-19

Philadelphia, PA – Today, Dr. Nina Ahmad, a scientist and Democratic candidate for Pennsylvania Auditor General, unveiled her plan for using the Auditor General’s office to make sure more Pennsylvania residents have access to affordable healthcare.

“As a medical scientist, a mom and a woman of color, I think a lot about our nation’s healthcare system these days,” said Nina. “Between the global pandemic and the Trump Administration, we have pushed our health care system to the brink of collapse. We can change this and empower communities, by using the power of the Auditor General’s office to make sure that care and treatment for people struggling right now is financially realistic.”

As Auditor General, Dr. Ahmad will eliminate corporate abuse of the health care system such as price gouging, windfall profiteering and aggressive premium hikes. She will initiate a comprehensive audit of the health care system in order to bridge digital divides and provide decision maker’s with actionable information. Her plan calls for support for growing calls for a COVIDCARE FOR ALL plan paid for in part by rooting out windfalls from mega-corporations making excess profits during the crisis. Here’s a summary of Dr. Nina’s plan:

Prevent Double-Digit Premium Hikes Following the Pandemic: Dr. Ahmad will work with Governor Wolf to strengthen the ability of the Auditor General to oversee insurance companies and prescription benefit managers (PBMs) in order to ensure they act responsibly in the wake of COVID-19. As Pennsylvania works to recover, insurance companies and PBMs should be barred from double-digit premium hikes.

Hold Insurers and PBMs Accountable for Drug Pricing: Dr. Ahmad will examine what are known as “all manufactured derived revenues” generated by PBMs and their parent large insurers and not disclosed in voluntary reports of industry rebates, or what corporate insurers may otherwise provide. Pennsylvania paid almost $3.5 billion for outpatient Medicaid prescriptions in 2017 alone, and it
received just over $2 billion back from drug manufacturers for rebates, according to the Department of Human Services. This audit will ensure that policymakers really know what Pennsylvania’s drug costs are, and what is fair for the market.

Harness Data and Technology to Defeat COVID-19 and High Drug Costs: By working in partnership with union health care plans, small businesses, community pharmacists, non-profits, and towns, Dr. Ahmad will leverage data and the power of the Auditor General Office to accelerate adoption of market indices already in use which provide clear information and transparency. The indices give a clearer picture of what prescription drugs should cost, so everyone will be in a stronger position to reduce their own spending. They are already in place in Altoona, PA, where officials are using an improved, technology-based approach that allows for drug coverage for part-time workers for the first-time.

Dr. Nina will also work in concert with the Governor and legislature, state Attorney General Josh Shapiro, and the Health Department to reform a 65-year-old law which restricts whether the entire commonwealth is entitled to detailed data about infectious diseases in their areas.

Champion Nurses, Doctors and All Front-Line Health Care Workers: Dr. Nina Ahmad will lead the design of an audit to assess pandemic readiness incorporating the lessons learned from the current COVID-19 pandemic. It will be designed with a broad-based committee at the table who were on the front lines of this current pandemic including healthcare workers, public health experts, supply chain experts, economists, labor organizers, community organizers and also patients who recovered from COVID-19. More broadly, while in office, Dr. Nina will address equity in education and waste in higher education and direct overall that unnecessary tax dollars return to the community to truly support students, workers and responsible employers. She will track the use of living wages and support working families harmed by unfair or unsafe labor practices, wage theft or other workplace violations.

Analyze and address the effects of unnecessary costs from antiquated and discriminatory barriers to care: Republicans have largely controlled Harrisburg and the legislature for nearly two decades, and they have consistently put in place barriers to healthcare. Medicaid expansion was stymied for nearly half a decade and tied to job requirements that disproportionately hurt black and Latino communities, until Governor Wolf took decisive action. Similarly, maternal mortality is affecting black, Latina and Asian women due in part to historic cuts in health care at the local level by Republicans in Congress and Harrisburg. Dr. Ahmad’s plan will pay careful attention to this epidemic as well, and work with Dr. Rachel Levine, Pennsylvania’s Secretary of Health on a coordinated data driven response.

“Nina’s background as a scientist and proven leader is demanded now more than ever. Dr. Nina will help invigorate communities and compel responsible action now,” said Dr. Walter Tsou, MD, the former Philadelphia Health Commissioner.

For more on Nina Ahmad and her detailed plan please visit https://medium.com/@ninaforpa or www.ninaforpa.com.