

Monday, May 4, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

The undersigned organizations enthusiastically support your determination to pass meaningful health care reform legislation as quickly as possible this year. Reforming our nation's health care system is essential to protecting America's families who increasingly find health care unaffordable. As Congress designs health care reform legislation, it should consider President Obama's health reform framework of building upon and improving what currently works in our system. For low-income people, this means expanding and strengthening Medicaid.

Medicaid is specifically designed to serve low-income people. Medicaid's limits on out-of-pocket spending help ensure that these individuals—who tend to have more intensive health care needs—receive the services they need. Medicaid also guarantees a comprehensive benefit package that provides appropriate coverage to people with diverse health care needs, including people with disabilities, children, pregnant women, parents and seniors. And unlike the private health insurance market, people enrolled in Medicaid cannot be turned away because they are sick or have experienced health problems in the past. Moreover, Medicaid is cost-effective and has a proven track record in every state. It is significantly less expensive to cover low-income people in Medicaid than in private health insurance.

For these reasons, Medicaid must be a central building block of any health reform legislation. As a component in the broader reform package, Congress should establish a nationwide Medicaid eligibility floor for all adults to build a strong foundation of coverage for low-income people. Although Medicaid provides invaluable coverage for 60 million Americans, in 43 states, adults without dependent children are not eligible for Medicaid, even if they are penniless. We also urge Congress to consider ways to modernize Medicaid's eligibility rules, improve provider payments, strengthen the program's overall financing, and integrate Medicaid into system-wide efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of our nation's health care.

We are eager to work with you toward the goal of ensuring that all Americans receive the high-quality, affordable health care they need and deserve.

ACCSES

AFL-CIO

AIDS Treatment Data Network

Alliance for Children and Families

Alzheimer's Association

American Association of Homes & Services for the Aging

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Dental Education Association

American Diabetes Association

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Health Care Association

American Medical Women's Association

American Network of Community Options and Resources

American Nurses Association

American Podiatric Medical Association

American Psychological Association

American Public Health Association

Association for Community Affiliated Plans

Breast Cancer Network of Strength

Campaign for Mental Health Reform

Center for Adolescent Health & the Law

Center for Community Change
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Child Welfare League of America
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Action Partnership
Community Catalyst
Consumer Action
Easter Seals
Families USA
HIV Medicine Association
Japanese American Citizens League
Legal Action Center
Lutheran Services in America
Mental Health America
National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of People with AIDS
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Coordinating Committee for Multiemployer Plans
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Health Law Program
National Respite Coalition
National Senior Citizens Law Center
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Project Inform
RESULTS
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Society for Adolescent Medicine
The Arc of the United States
Treatment Access Expansion Project
United Cerebral Palsy
United Jewish Communities
United Neighborhood Centers of America
United Spinal Association
United Steelworkers
URJ
VOR
Women of Reform Judaism