

November 19, 2008

President-Elect Barack Obama
Executive Office of the President-Elect
451 6th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President-Elect Obama:

Our nation is in a period of unprecedented economic uncertainty, and the current financial crisis threatens to depress economic growth for a prolonged period of time and lead to hardship for families and businesses, while government budgets will be under stress. The new President must get our economy back on track and that depends on addressing health care.

We, a diverse group of organizations representing tens of millions of Americans, urge you to include meaningful health care reform as one of your first domestic priorities, and we stand ready to support you in national reform efforts to address our health care crisis. We respectfully request that you begin the urgent national conversation on health care immediately by convening a health care "summit" that brings experts, leaders, advocates, and patients together to set an ambitious agenda for our nation's health and health care.

We cannot afford to delay identifying and implementing solutions to the disturbing health care trends that undermine the economic security of our families, limit the productivity of our workforce, inhibit job creation and wage growth, and threaten to crowd out investments in energy, education, and infrastructure.

Those trends are well known to most Americans. Between 2000 and 2007, family premiums for employer-provided coverage rose 5.4 times faster than median worker earnings. Year after year, health care costs grow at a rate that outpaces our overall economic and wage growth. Health care expenses drive families into debt; nearly half of foreclosures were caused at least in part by a medical problem. Families forgo necessary care and jeopardize the health and productivity of the next generation of American students and workers. Each year we spend more on health care, yet our spending is not improving the health status of millions of Americans.

Over the last 20 years, whether the economy was growing or contracting, the number of Americans without health insurance continued to climb. The undersigned organizations share a common understanding that expanded coverage is an integral component of a comprehensive solution to contain health care costs and improve health outcomes.

We stand ready to support you in a national conversation to fix health care, to focus on prevention and chronic care, to give patients more tools to manage their health, to give all Americans meaningful coverage, and build a more sustainable health care system that consistently delivers value to all of us, and that strengthens us as a nation. We pledge our support for such a conversation as well as an early effort to secure meaningful health care reform.

Sincerely,

AARP	Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Alzheimer's Association	
American Academy of Family Physicians	Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
American Academy of Pediatrics	Association of University Centers on Disabilities
American Academy of Physician Assistants	Bazon Center for Mental Health Law
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy	Campaign for Mental Health Reform
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry	Catholic Health Association of the United States
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists	Catholic Health Initiatives
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network	Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
American Dental Education Association	Center for Science in the Public Interest
American Diabetes Association	CHADD, Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
American Heart Association	Children's Defense Fund
American Medical Women's Association	Child Welfare League of America
American Network of Community Options and Resources	Coalition on Human Needs
American Nurses Association	Community Catalyst
American Optometric Association	Consumers Union
American Psychiatric Administration	The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
American Psychological Association	Easter Seals
American Public Health Association	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
American Stroke Association	Families USA
Ascension Health	Family Voices
Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum	Health Care For America Now (HCAN)
Association for Community Affiliated Plans	Herndon Alliance
Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now	HIV Medicine Association
	Huntington's Disease Society of America

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
Legal Action Center
Lutheran Services in America
Mental Health America
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
National Academies of Practice
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
The National Beauty Culturists' League Incorporated
National Coalition on Health Care
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Consumers League
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Council on Aging
National Education Association
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association
National Health Council
National Health Law Program (NHeLP)
National Hemophilia Foundation
National Medical Association
National Partnership for Women and Families
National Respite Coalition
National Senior Citizens Law Center
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Patient Privacy Rights
PHI Health Care for Health Care Workers Campaign
PICO National Network
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Project Inform
Raising Women's Voices
Research!America
Service Employees International Union
Small Business Majority
State Associations of Addiction Services
United Jewish Communities
United Spinal Association

USAction

U.S. Public Interest Research Group

Voice of the Retarded

Women of Reform Judaism

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Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
United States Senate
Washington, DC 200510

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 200510

Chairman Edward Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 200510

Ranking Member Michael Enzi
United States Senate
Washington, DC 200510

Chairman Max Baucus
United States Senate
Washington, DC 200510

Ranking Member Charles Grassley
United States Senate
Washington, DC 200510

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

House Minority Leader John Boehner
United States House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
United States House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman John Dingell
United States House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Joe Barton
United States House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Charles Rangel
United States House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman George Miller
United States House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Buck McKeon
United States House of Representative
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders, Committee Chairs and Ranking Members:

Our nation is in a period of unprecedented economic uncertainty, and the current financial crisis threatens to depress economic growth for a prolonged period of time and lead to hardship for families and businesses, while government budgets will be under stress. The new Congress and President must get our economy back on track and that depends on addressing health care.

We, a diverse group of organizations representing tens of millions of Americans, urge you to include meaningful health care reform as one of the first domestic priorities of the 111th Congress. We stand ready to support the Congress and President in national reform efforts to address our health care crisis.

We cannot afford to delay identifying and implementing solutions to the disturbing health care trends that undermine the economic security of our families, limit the productivity of our workforce, inhibit job creation and wage growth, and threaten to crowd out investments in energy, education, and infrastructure.

Those trends are well known to most Americans. Between 2000 and 2007, family premiums for employer-provided coverage rose 5.4 times faster than median worker earnings. Year after year, health care costs grow at a rate that outpaces our overall economic and wage growth. Health care expenses drive families into debt; nearly half of foreclosures were caused at least in part by a medical problem. Families forgo necessary care and jeopardize the health and productivity of the next generation of American students and workers. Each year we spend more on health care, yet our spending is not improving the health status of millions of Americans.

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