

January 28, 2010

Dear Congressional Delegation:

We the undersigned are a coalition of unions, consumers, community and advocacy organizations that are working together to ensure that national health reform legislation is passed, and that it meets the needs of New York residents and workers. We represent and encompass people who are uninsured, who are unable to access health care services, and who work in the health care system and are frustrated with their inability to provide quality health care services to everyone. We have watched, and tried to stop, the erosion of the health care safety net as a critical component of access to care for many communities. **We are also united in our belief that health insurance coverage must be extended to greater numbers of residents in this state.**

We thank you for taking leadership over the last year in the national debate on health reform. We believe that it is more critical than ever that you continue to fight for the health, safety, and protection of all New Yorkers. We are writing to request that our Congressional representatives act now on national health reform legislation. This action should include negotiations between the leadership of the House and the Senate on the House passage of the Senate bill, and the specific inclusions by the Senate of corrections in budget reconciliation language that they will approve. These actions need to be taken quickly so that the important momentum for change is not lost.

The reconciliation language agreed to by the House and the Senate must include at a minimum the following amendments to the Senate bill:

- Acceptance of House language pertaining to reductions in **Medicaid DSH** funding. After passage of national health reform legislation there will still be millions of people who are medically underinsured, and perhaps uninsurable. The DSH funding is critical to ensure that the uninsured, and communities that are medically underserved, continue to have access to health care services. Public hospitals in this state, and across the nation, are the best guarantee, along with FQHC's, that people continue to have access to care within their communities. In the event of any DSH cuts, at a minimum these must be offset by expanding health insurance coverage of the population served by the public hospitals.
- Acceptance of House language pertaining to **FMAP** – federal Medicaid matching dollars – be equitably available for all states to provide Medicaid coverage for an expanded population. We are totally supportive of the expansion of Medicaid coverage to larger numbers of people with higher incomes than some states currently allow. This is a reasonable way to ensure that low-income individuals and families have access to health insurance coverage that they cannot afford to purchase privately. The Senate bill disadvantages states like New York which has been doing the “right thing” and expanding Medicaid and other public insurance coverage to residents with slightly higher incomes. The House bill would provide matching federal dollars to New York as expansion occurs. New York State and its localities currently face huge budget deficits. Without these additional federal funds, our state and local governments will be forced to reduce other critical services in order to comply with the expansion mandate. This would be an untenable choice. New York State should be treated equitably under the proposed Medicaid expansion in the bill.

- **The ban that keeps documented immigrants from coverage must be eliminated** – In both the House and Senate bills, the five-year bar for immigrant eligibility for public insurance coverage is continues. This continues a discriminatory policy with great impact on persons who work and contribute to the tax base of this state and country. This policy has a continuing negative impact on the numbers of U.S. residents who will have health insurance coverage, if they are not covered at their work place.

Members of our coalition have other areas of concern, but these are the three critical changes that we have all agreed upon. Our coalition is willing to work with you to ensure that the most comprehensive health reform legislation possible is adopted. Please let us know what we can do to assist you in making this happen.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Commission on the Public's Health System (CPHS)

Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR) SEIU Healthcare

Council of Municipal Hospitals' Community Advisory Boards

District Council 37, AFSCME

Doctors Council SEIU

Health Care for America Now- New York

Metro New York Health Care for All Campaign

New York Immigration Coalition

New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA)

Please reply (and will be shared with all) to:      Doctors Council SEIU  
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