

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	Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Alzheimer's Association	Association for Community Affiliated Plans
American Academy of Family Physicians	Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now
American Academy of Pediatrics	Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
American Academy of Physician Assistants	Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy	Association of University Centers on Disabilities
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry	Bazon Center for Mental Health Law
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists	Breast Cancer Network of Strength
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network	Campaign for Mental Health Reform
American Dental Education Association	Catholic Health Association of the United States
American Diabetes Association	Catholic Health Initiatives
American Heart Association	Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
American Medical Women's Association	Center for Science in the Public Interest
American Network of Community Options and Resources	CHADD, Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
American Nurses Association	Children's Defense Fund
American Optometric Association	Child Welfare League of America
American Psychiatric Administration	Coalition on Human Needs
American Psychological Association	Community Catalyst
American Public Health Association	Consumer Action
American Stroke Association	Consumers Union
Ascension Health	

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Easter Seals  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Families USA  
Family Voices  
Health Care For America Now (HCAN)  
Herndon Alliance  
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