

Joint Public Statement:

“Physicians in Support of President Obama: Give Our Patients a Choice Between Private Insurance and a Public Health Insurance Option”

June 15, 2009

As doctors who work on the front lines of our fractured healthcare system, we are convinced by firsthand experience that our patients desperately need health care reform that protects them from falling through the cracks. This means reform that creates the freedom of choice to keep their current plan, choose another private plan, or have the choice of a carefully designed quality, affordable public health insurance plan.

All doctors need to work together to solve our health care crisis. Part of this solution should be the inclusion of a high-quality public health insurance option that competes fairly with private plans. Having the choice of a public health insurance plan will help make health care more affordable for patients, foster greater competition in the insurance market, and guarantee that quality, affordable coverage will be there for our patients no matter what happens.

When you talk to doctors on the ground, you find a rich diversity in experiences and opinions in the American physician workforce today. But one thing unites us: delivering quality, affordable care to our patients.

As doctors, we see patients every day who are more afraid of their medical bills than their illnesses. It frustrates and saddens us to care for patients with what began as a simple and inexpensive medical problem, but has developed into a life-threatening condition. It makes us angry to see children suffering from treatable illnesses, like asthma, in the Emergency Room because they literally have nowhere else to go.

We believe that the creation of a public health insurance option can break the stranglehold that out-of-control healthcare costs have on our patients by fostering choice and competition. As the American Medical Association first reported, 94% of insurance markets are now highly concentrated—and as a result, premiums have skyrocketed -- increasing more than 87%, on average, over the past six years.

Giving our patients the choice of keeping what they have or enrolling in a public health insurance plan will:

- enable patients to keep their own doctor, regardless of changes in employment or health
- increase affordability

- promote collaborative, team-based care
- provide better care to patients by driving innovation in the quality of care we provide
- force private health insurers to compete on a level-playing field, especially in limited markets
- remove access barriers to quality care among underserved, rural and minority communities, who disproportionately have fewer choices for their health care needs and often experience significant disparities in care
- provide everyone the peace of mind that their quality, affordable coverage will always be there, no matter what

As doctors, we remain firmly committed to supporting a uniquely American solution to provide quality, affordable health care for all.

We urge Congress and the President to continue fighting to achieve real, meaningful reform this year. Health care will finally cost less and cover more, and will be accessible to all. We believe that by seizing the moment and reforming our broken system, our patients will be the real winners.

The American Academy of Family Physicians

The American Medical Student Association

The Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU Healthcare

Doctors Council/SEIU Healthcare

Doctors for America

The National Physicians Alliance

The Student National Medical Association