

Maine

December 19, 2008

Dear President-elect Obama:

As you no doubt heard directly from voters during the election season, families across Maine are increasingly anxious about health care and are eager to see the new Administration and Congress keep their pledge to enact reforms that will ensure that every American has access to affordable and stable health insurance coverage and high-quality health care.

With rising premiums far out-pacing wages, everyone is feeling the effects. Family premiums for health coverage have increased 30 percent since 2001, while income has increased just three percent. Businesses that offer health insurance see it in their bottom lines, and family budgets are being strained by rising out-of-pocket costs. For the small businesses that can't offer coverage and individuals who do not have coverage, the possibilities of obtaining coverage grow ever dimmer.

The recent downturn in the economy has compounded these problems. Chief among people's economic worries are the health and well being of their families. They fear not being able to take their child to the doctor or get the medications they need to stay healthy and take care of their loved ones.

Fixing the economy and reforming our health care system must be inextricably linked. Polling data collected prior to the election asked likely voters to rank policy ideas based on how effective they would be at improving the current economic situation, and the top two answers were reducing health care costs and providing health care to all Americans.

As we move into a new presidential administration and Congress, our national leaders must work together to find common-ground policies to provide coverage to all Americans.

We therefore urge you to make comprehensive health reform the top domestic priority in your administration and the one that you tackle first. Maine's children, businesses, seniors, people with disabilities and families are counting on action and your leadership.

Sincerely,

Consumers for Affordable Health Care
Disability Rights Center
Equality Maine
Kennebec Valley Organization

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods
Maine Council of Churches
Maine Association of Mental Health Services
Maine Center for Economic Policy
Maine Equal Justice Partners
Maine People's Alliance
Maine State Employees Association – SEIU
National Association of Social Workers – Maine Chapter