

HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA **NOW!**

December 16, 2008

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, United States Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6200

Dear Chairman Baucus:

At our kick-off on July 8, 2008, **Health Care for America Now (HCAN)** announced an unprecedented coalition of 135 national and state-based groups that represent labor, community organizations, doctors, nurses, women, small business, faith-based organizations, people of color, netroots activists, and think tanks.¹ Over the past five months, the **HCAN** coalition has grown to now include more than 540 national and state-based groups representing well in excess of 11 million people.

HCAN is organizing millions of Americans to ensure that 2009 is the year our nation enacts a guarantee of quality, affordable health care for everyone. As you well know, our current health care system is not affordable for families, businesses, or government, and it fails to provide a guarantee of quality health care when that security is needed most. As stated in the **HCAN Statement of Common Purpose**, a document that articulates our principles and vision for health care reform, **HCAN** believes in a comprehensive solution in which all of us – individuals, employers and government – share responsibility for guaranteeing health care we all can count on.

HCAN salutes you for issuing “Call to Action, Health Reform 2009”, a proposal that embodies many of the principles that **HCAN** is advocating. The overarching goal you articulate – to ensure that every individual can access coverage that is affordable, clinically appropriate, provides access to necessary health care services, and protects enrollees against high health care expenses – is a standard for all subsequent health care reform proposals to meet. In particular, we commend you for proposing to:

- ensure that individuals and families have the ability to retain their employer-sponsored coverage or choose to enroll in a new national public insurance plan

¹ Coalition Steering Committee Members include ACORN, AFSCME, Americans United for Change, Campaign for America’s Future, Center for American Progress Action Fund, Campaign for Community Change, Children’s Defense Fund Action Council, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, MoveOn.org, National Council of La Raza, National Education Association, National Women’s Law Center, SEIU, United Food and Commercial Workers, and US Action.

option;

- realign payment incentives to improve the quality of care provided, including increasing access to preventive care as well as to chronic care management;
- invest in comparative effectiveness research; and
- bring comprehensive health insurance coverage within the financial reach of millions of individuals and families through the shared responsibility of families, employers, and government.

HCAN offers its support to you, your staff, and the other Finance Committee members as we work with Congress and President-elect Obama to establish a guarantee of quality, affordable health care that we can all count on. In particular, we look to work with you to:

- ensure affordability for the broadest range of low to middle-income families, with health insurance premiums and total out of pocket costs based on a family's ability to pay and not being a barrier to receiving care;
- establish a standard for health benefits that covers all necessary care, including what people need to keep healthy and to be treated when they are ill;
- create an adequate watchdog role on all plans; and
- design the public plan to offer a true choice of plan options, to create a functional mechanism for restraining the growth in national health care expenditures, and to address the health care access and outcome disparities our nation suffers.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to enact our shared vision for health care reform. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Doneg McDonough, **HCAN** Legislative and Policy Director, at 202-454-6194.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Kirsch', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Kirsch
National Campaign Manager
Health Care for America Now