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February 22, 2010

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Health Reform Summit convened by you provides an important opportunity to find out if bipartisanship can be achieved to enact *meaningful* health care reform.

We welcome this effort.

We also believe that the success of the Summit is dependent on whether it truly moves the nation to meaningful health care reform this year.

Meaningful health care reform must realistically achieve the following objectives:

- 1. It must make health coverage affordable and protect families against financial devastation when they need care.** Health insurance premiums are increasingly unaffordable for America's families and businesses. Additionally, too many people are being forced into huge debts and bankruptcy when they need care. Health care reform must realistically fix these problems.
- 2. It must extend health coverage to the tens of millions of working Americans who are uninsured.** Health care reform needs to aim towards quality, affordable health coverage for everyone. It must extend adequate coverage so that people get the care they need.
- 3. It must eliminate insurance company and health system waste.** Health care reform must reduce high administrative costs, unnecessary tests and services, waste, and other inefficiencies that consume money with no added health benefits.
- 4. It must provide portability of coverage and eliminate insurance company abuses that deny coverage for people needing care.** Health care reform must ensure that workers are not locked into their job just to secure health coverage, and no American should be denied coverage due to a pre-existing condition.
- 5. It must place the nation on a path of fiscal sustainability.** Health care reform should significantly help to reduce budget deficits in the decades ahead.

These are the key yardsticks for measuring whether health reform proposals constitute meaningful reform. They form a sound basis for evaluating the existing House and Senate bills as well as alternative ideas that may be offered during the Summit.

In our judgment, both the Senate and House bills meet these yardsticks and constitute meaningful reform.

- They protect families' financial health by providing subsidies to middle-class and lower-income families so they can afford health insurance premiums; placing limits in out-of-pocket expenses that families must pay when they receive needed care; providing special subsidies to lower-income families so they won't face bankruptcy when they get needed care; offering subsidies to small businesses so that they can provide affordable health insurance for their employees; investing in cost-effective prevention and primary care improvements; and providing relief to seniors requiring multiple medicines by ameliorating the "doughnut hole."
- They not only aim to cover everyone, they come close to achieving it by adding health coverage to approximately 31-37 million uninsured people.
- They make numerous cost efficiencies. As two illustrations among many others, they make health coverage more affordable by reducing premium dollars that can be used for purposes other than health care, and they provide payments to hospitals based on quality of care rather than quantity of care.
- They provide portability of coverage by prohibiting insurance companies from denying coverage due to pre-existing conditions; stopping insurers from ending health coverage when someone gets sick; banning discriminatory premiums based on health status and gender; reducing premium discrimination based on age; and enabling working families to secure health coverage in a new marketplace (the "exchange") when a breadwinner loses a job or starts a new business.
- They reduce the federal budget deficit. For example, the Congressional Budget Office projects that the Senate bill will reduce the deficit over the next ten years by \$132 billion and the following ten years by hundreds of billions of dollars.

In their entirety, we believe the bills that the Senate and House have passed would achieve meaningful reform. They move close to securing quality, affordable health coverage and care for all Americans.

We welcome ideas that strengthen these historic improvements for America's families and businesses, and we welcome alternative ways for truly achieving meaningful reform.

But doing less than that is not acceptable.

America's families expect their elected leaders to work together to solve our nation's problems, and they need health reform now.

Congress should move expeditiously to complete the almost century-old goal of meaningful reform without delay.

We respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss how we can proceed together towards our mutual goal of enacting meaningful reform.

Sincerely,

Molly Daniels, Interim President  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Tom Van Coverden, President and CEO  
National Association of Community Health Centers

Shereen Arent, Executive Vice President  
American Diabetes Association

Debra Ness, President  
National Partnership for Women & Families

Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR, President  
American Nurses Association

Rev. Heyward Wiggins, III, Co-Chair  
PICO National Network

Jim Guest, President and CEO  
Consumers Union

Andrew L. Stern, President  
Dennis Rivera, Chair, SEIU Healthcare  
SEIU

Ron Pollack, Executive Director  
Families USA