

Health Rights Organizing Project

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader of the United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

March 16, 2010

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Reid:

The undersigned organizations urge you to remedy two critical components of comprehensive health insurance reform impacting immigrant populations.

We believe that health insurance reform should benefit everyone in America, and that reform should create a truly inclusive and accessible health care system in which no one is left out. It is critical that lawfully present immigrants have access to subsidies to purchase insurance on the exchange and we are happy that this is included in the Senate health reform bill. However, in order for very low-income lawful residents to be treated equitably in health reform, they must have full access to Medicaid, which offers strong cost sharing and premium protections. We urge you to ensure lawfully present immigrants are treated fairly as you complete the work of drafting and passing comprehensive health insurance reform by using any tools available to add a provision that would permit lawfully present immigrants to access Medicaid if they are otherwise qualified.

Immigrants contribute to this nation's workforce, pay their fair share of taxes, and pursue citizenship to its fullest potential. Yet, under existing law, many low-income legal immigrants must wait five years to obtain Medicaid coverage. The continuation of the five-year Medicaid waiting period for legal immigrants will make it more difficult for them to afford care while at the same time mandating that they purchase insurance. The five-year waiting period precludes individuals from obtaining necessary services to prevent serious medical conditions from worsening. This type of restriction is not only unfair but also excludes immigrants from a critical safety net that their taxes help support.

We also urge you to amend provisions in the Senate bill that prohibit undocumented immigrants from purchasing unsubsidized insurance products with their own money through new exchanges. These provisions in the Senate legislation will impose a costly new verification system upon each person who seeks coverage through the exchange, whether they are an immigrant or a U.S. citizen. By removing these provisions you will eliminate an unwieldy bureaucracy and an impractical bar to the insurance marketplace.

The existence of these discriminatory provisions will mean that adequate health coverage will not be available to significant populations – especially the four million U. S. citizen children who live in mixed status families. Retaining these provisions will merely shift costs to the general population and ultimately burden us all with poorly designed policies that undercut everyone's access to affordable health coverage.

We thank you for your efforts and urge you to ensure that immigrant communities gain meaningful access to the affordable, quality health care they need.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Friends Service Committee
American Muslim Health Professionals
Asian American Justice Center
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian Immigrant Women Advocates
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (AHRP)
Coalition Against Slavery and Trafficking (CAST)
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Catalyst
Community Clinic Consortium
Commission on the Public's Health System
Disciples Justice Action Network
Democracy in Action
Domestic Violence Action Center
Easter Seals
EQUAL Health
Faithful Reform in Health Care
Families USA
Farmworker Justice
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Justice Ministry, Metropolitan Community Churches
Japanese American Citizens League
Japanese American Citizens League-Pacific Southwest District
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
Latinos for National Health Insurance
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mennonite Central Committee
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NAACP
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA)
National Council of la Raza
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Health Law Program
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

National Latino Behavioral Health Association
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Physicians Alliance
National Senior Citizens Law Center
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations
OCA - Embracing the Hopes and Aspirations of Asian Pacific Americans
OneAmerica
Out of Many One
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
Progressive States Network
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition (REHDC)
RESULTS
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Inc
The AIDS Institute
The Mainstreet Alliance
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Western Center on Law & Poverty
Western Province of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth

Alabama

Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, Inc.

Arizona

Global Family Legal Services

California

ACCESS/Women's Health Rights Coalition
ACT for Women and Girls
Asian Law Caucus
Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California
Black Alliance for Just Immigration
California Immigrant Policy Center
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño
Central American Resource Center CARECEN
Clinicas del Camino Real
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
Having Our Say
Health Access California
Korean Resource Center
La Luz Center

Lutheran Office of Public Policy – California
Parent Voices of Sonoma County
Services, Immigrant, Rights, and Education Network (SIREN)
Venice Family Clinic

Colorado

Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence

Connecticut

Collaborative Center for Justice
Connecticut Legal Services, Inc
Khmer Health Advocates, Inc
New Haven Legal Assistance Association

Florida

Children's Services Council of Broward County
Pax Christi Northeast Florida

Georgia

Georgia Rural Urban Summit

Hawaii

Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services

Illinois

AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Campaign for Better Health Care
Korean American Resource & Cultural Center
Logan Square Neighborhood Association
United African Organization

Kentucky

Covering Kentucky Kids and Families
Kentucky Equal Justice Center

Maine

Maine People's Alliance

Maryland

Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform

Massachusetts

Health Care For All
Immigration Equality
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Northeast Action
Our Bodies Ourselves

Michigan

Arab Community Center for Economic & Social Services ACCESS
MichUHCAN

Mississippi

Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities

Montana

Montana Human Rights Network

Missouri

Center for Immigrant Healthcare Justice

New Mexico

El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
Planned Parenthood of New Mexico
Southwest Women's Law Center

New York

CARECEN (Central American Refugee Center)
Central American Refugee Center of Hempstead, N.Y.
Coalition for Asian American Children & Families
Community Healthcare Network
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)
Empire Justice Center
Farmworker Legal Services of NY, Inc
Flushing Jewish Community Council
Hudson Health Plan
la Fuente
Make the Road New York
Metro New York Health Care for All Campaign
MinKwon Center for Community Action
Medicaid Matters New York
Migrant Support Services of Wayne County
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI)

New York Immigration Coalition
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
Project CHARGE
Queens Counseling Services of FRMH
Reproductive Health Access Project
Spanish American Medical Dental Society of New York
The Bronx Health Link
The Immigrant Center for Empowerment & Training
The Hudson Center for Health Equity & Quality
Westchester Hispanic Coalition, Inc

Nevada

PLAN, the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

New Jersey

New Jersey Immigration Policy Network
St. Anthony of Padua Social Justice Group
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey

North Carolina

Immigrant Justice Program
International Friendship Center
North Carolina Justice Center

Oregon

Oregon Action

Ohio

Faithful Reform in Health Care
UHCAN Ohio

Pennsylvania

Community Legal Services Inc. of Philadelphia
Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Rhode Island

Ocean State Action

Virginia

Virginia Poverty Law Center

Washington

Lutheran Public Policy Office
Northwest Health Law Advocates
Parents Organizing For Welfare and Economic Rights
Solid Ground
The Children's Alliance
Washington Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics

Wisconsin

Milwaukee Latino Health Coalition

Tennessee

Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition

Texas

La Fe Policy Research and Education Center