

**Missouri Health Advocacy Alliance
606 East Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101
573-634-9800**

December 15, 2008

Dear President-Elect Obama:

As you no doubt heard directly from voters during the election season, families across Missouri 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 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 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. Missouri's children, businesses, seniors, people with disabilities and families are counting on action and your leadership.

While not all of the organizations listed below are members of the Missouri Health Advocacy Alliance, these advocacy organizations in Missouri, and others, will be working together to make certain comprehensive health care reform is addressed as the top domestic priority in the new administration and the new Congress.

Sincerely,

Missouri Health Advocacy Alliance
Missouri Health Care For All!
Disability Coalition on Health Care Reform
Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Inc.
Deaconess Parish Nurse Ministries, LLC
Disabled Citizens Alliance for Independence
Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri
Missouri Budget Project
Missouri Jobs With Justice
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
National Alliance on Mental Illness—Missouri Chapter
Paraquad, Inc.
Services for Independent Living, Columbia, Missouri
Southside Welfare Rights
St. Andrew's Senior Solutions
Swope Health Services

P. S. If you have any questions about this letter or need further information, please feel free to call Andrea J. Routh, Executive Director, Missouri Health Advocacy Alliance at 573-634-9800.