

# Rhode Island

December 23, 2008

President-Elect Barack Obama  
Executive Office of the President  
451 6th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President-Elect Obama:

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

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society New England Division  
Health Right, the RI Working Group on Health Care Reform  
National Association of Social Workers, RI Chapter

Neighborhood Health Plan of RI  
Ocean State Action  
PAL, an advocacy organization for families and children with disabilities  
RI Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
RI Coalition of School Social Workers  
RI Developmental Disabilities Nurses Association  
RI KIDS COUNT  
RI Medical Society  
RI NOW  
The Homestead Group  
RI State Nurses Association  
The Groden Center, Inc  
The Poverty Institute  
The Rhode Island Foster Parents Association  
United Nurses and Allied Professionals

cc: Senator Jack Reed  
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse  
Representative Patrick Kennedy  
Representative James Langevin

