



## Community Catalyst's National Health Reform Priorities

National health reform presents the opportunity to transform our broken and costly health care system so that it provides high-quality, affordable care for all. The public demands no less.

Community Catalyst believes consumers must be fully engaged and have an organized voice to improve the health care system. We collaborate with advocates in more than 40 states to ensure the consumer voice is part of any reform effort. We provided extensive support to Massachusetts's advocates and consumers in their health reform efforts, so we bring lessons learned from this experience to propel the national effort.

### **We believe comprehensive national reform legislation should include the following priorities:**

**Ensure Affordable Coverage.** The number one reason that families lack health care coverage is they cannot afford it. For reform to be successful, people need to be able to afford insurance, especially if an individual mandate is instituted. Congress must develop an affordability standard that ensures people can obtain quality coverage and that protects consumers from major financial burdens.

**Strengthen Medicaid.** National health reform should maintain and expand Medicaid to provide comprehensive coverage and high-quality, culturally-appropriate care for children and individuals with low-incomes and special health care needs.

**Build the Voice of Consumers.** National reform should provide consumers with the information and trouble-shooting services they need to get the right care at the right time. Systematically engaging consumers will help providers, insurers and policymakers learn from and reduce problems as health care reform is implemented.

**Create a Strong Public Plan Option.** A public plan would give people more choice, create a benchmark against which to measure the performance of private insurers, help reduce the growth of overall health costs and facilitate improvements to the delivery system.

**Improve Quality of Care for Children.** National health reform should create stronger financial and coverage protections for Medicaid-eligible children and families. Legislation should also increase access to quality, coordinated health care through medical home programs and offer comprehensive benefits to children with special health care needs through the Family Opportunity Act.

**Design Strong Insurance Reforms as the Basis of an Exchange.** An Exchange must build on a strong foundation of insurance market reforms, set standards for comprehensive benefits in plans, and provide consumers with sufficient information to make informed choices.

**Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities.** The reduction and eventual elimination of health care disparities should be a national priority. Health reform should expand funding for the safety net, support community-based outreach and prevention efforts, establish benchmarks for reducing health disparities based on comprehensive data, and include incentives to increase the diversity of all health professions.

**Improve Care for “Dual Eligibles.”** People eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare, among the most vulnerable members of our society, require services spread across our currently fragmented system and account for a disproportionate amount of health care spending. National reform should anchor the delivery system in family-centered primary care and establish appropriate payment, clinical and organizational systems to integrate care.

**Strengthen Requirements for Community Benefits.** In order to retain tax-exempt status, not-for-profit hospitals should be required to develop a community benefits plan with the help of consumers and to establish meaningful charity care, fair billing and debt collection practices. The government should condition Disproportionate Share Hospital funding on the adoption of community benefits and charity care standards to build greater accountability while continuing to allow states to direct funds to areas of greatest need.

**Promote Appropriate Prescribing.** National health reform should create research and education programs to help health practitioners choose the most effective, safe and appropriate medications. This will improve care and help to contain the escalating drug costs that undermine affordability. Legislation should also require annual reporting by drug and medical device companies of their payments and gifts to health care practitioners.