

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Statement on Senate Action on Health Care Reform Legislation

July 2, 2009

For decades, Washington has failed to act as health care costs continued to rise, crushing businesses, families, and placing an unsustainable burden on governments. Today the Senate HELP Committee has produced legislation that lowers costs, protects choice of doctors and plans, and assures quality and affordable health care for Americans. The Congressional Budget Office has now issued a more complete review of this bill, concluding that it will cost less and cover more Americans than originally estimated. It also contains provisions that will protect the coverage Americans get at work. When merged with the Senate Finance Committee's companion pieces, the Senate will be prepared to vote for health reform legislation that does not add to the deficit, reduces health care costs, and covers 97% of Americans.

The HELP Committee legislation reflects many of the principles I've laid out, such as reforms that will prohibit insurance companies from refusing coverage for people with preexisting conditions and the concept of insurance exchanges where individuals can find affordable coverage if they lose their jobs, move, or get sick. Such a marketplace would allow families and some small businesses the benefit of one-stop-shopping for their health care coverage and enable them to compare price and quality and pick the plan that best suits their needs.

Among the choices that would be available in the exchange would be a public health insurance option. The public option would make health care affordable by increasing competition, providing more choices, and keeping the insurance companies honest. The legislation also improves the quality of patient care, improves safety for patients, and strengthens the commitment to preventive health care, preventing people from getting sick in the first place.

I thank Chairman Kennedy, Senator Dodd, and all the members of the HELP Committee for their hard work on health reform.

Categories: Statements by the President : Health care reform legislation, Senate action.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Dodd, Christopher J.; Kennedy, Edward M.

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