

AN APPEAL

To President Obama and Members of the 111th Congress

As state legislators, we are accustomed to dealing with budget uncertainties and program trade-offs, but now our states are being battered by the worst economic crisis in decades. For most states, revenues have plunged while needs escalate.

One of the greatest challenges we face is health care. Every state is facing shortfalls in Medicaid and other health programs as demand rises. The cost of providing health insurance for state employees grows faster than the funds to pay the bills. Legacy health care costs for retirees and future beneficiaries threaten state governments, and invite comparison with the situation facing the automobile industry and other industries.

We believe that meeting the challenge of rising health care costs and declining coverage is a national responsibility. Only a national program that removes the waste and inefficiency of our corporate dominated system can truly address the problems that all of us face.

Numerous state-based health reforms over the past two decades have failed to deliver on their promises of universal coverage, in large measure because they kept the private health insurance industry as a key player in the system. As a result, these would-be reforms did not insure everyone, and did not contain costs.

H.R. 676, The United States National Health Care Act (or Expanded and Improved Medicare for All), sponsored by Representative John Conyers of Michigan, provides a superb vehicle to bring necessary medical care to everyone, while saving hundreds of billions by eliminating the waste of the private, for-profit insurance system. The single-payer, not-for-profit funding mechanism makes it possible to shift \$380 billion to improve care. Only through a single-payer plan, an improved Medicare for All, can we bring costs under control and assure patient freedom of choice while expanding care.

President Obama stated in the presidential debates that he believes health care is a right. Polls show nearly two-thirds of the U.S. public believes that the federal government should guarantee health care to all through a single-payer system of national health insurance. A recent survey of American physicians revealed that 59% support government action to create a national health insurance system. For additional information regarding the benefits of a single-payer system, we urge you to review the website of Physicians for a National Health Program (www.pnhp.org).

The U.S. Conference of Mayors unanimously passed a resolution in support of H.R. 676. The Presbyterian Church USA, the Union for Reform Judaism, the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, the Unitarian Universalists, the Episcopal Urban Caucus, and the United Church of Christ have all passed resolutions supporting single-payer health care reform.

H.R. 676 has been endorsed by: state legislative chambers in Kentucky, New Hampshire, and New York; dozens of city councils and county governments; nearly 500 unions, including 39 state AFL-CIO's and 120 labor councils.

We call upon the members of the 111th Congress, in both the House and Senate, to co-sponsor, support and pass H.R. 676 and upon President Obama to sign this legislation. This program will offer state and local governments a real opportunity to reduce the impact of the economic crisis, and establish for the people of the United States an efficient, effective health care financing system that will assure health care for everyone in our nation.