

Date: February 5, 2010
To: IMCHC Staff, Board and Members
From: Kathy Chan, Associate Director
Re: Status of federal health care reform



Despite the recent election results in Massachusetts and what you may be hearing on the news, federal health care reform is very much still alive. In order to ensure that this issue continues to move forward, we need to keep the pressure on members of the Illinois Congressional delegation to advocate for the passage of health care reform.

As you know, every day that we wait to enact meaningful health care reform is another day that thousands of people lose their health insurance coverage, putting the physical, mental and financial well-being of individuals and families at risk.

As we move forward in the next few weeks, here are some important things to keep in mind:

1. It is not an issue of if, but when health care reform will pass.
2. Those who claim that there is little to no public support for reform ARE NOT telling the truth. Surveys conducted the by Kaiser Family Foundation indicate that support remains strong, especially after individuals learn about specific provisions included in health care reform bills.
3. While opponents criticize that this is a partisan issue, voters need to know that dozens of Republican amendments were adopted as part of both House and Senate bills. This is despite that fact that only one House Republican and NO Senate Republicans voted in favor of the reform bills in their respective chambers.

Specific to IMCHC projects, here are concrete examples of how reform will benefit the general public:

1. Low-income, uninsured adults would be eligible for Medicaid coverage. In Illinois, over 1.125 million are expected to gain health coverage under the Senate bill; nationwide, this number is estimated to be 31 million.
2. Insurance companies would no longer be allowed to discriminate against women and deny them coverage or charge them more in premium costs, just because of their gender.
3. Federal authorization and funding for school health centers would be made available, allowing numerous sites and interested communities access to federal funding for operating and capital costs for the first time.
4. Co-pays would be eliminated for preventative care services including annual women's checkups, well-visits and immunizations.
5. Families with premature infants or children with special health care needs would gain additional protections against medical bankruptcy as a result of caps on out-of-pocket costs and removal of annual limits on coverage.

What to do now?

Congress needs to hear from you. We are the closest we have ever been to passing reform – take action today and urge those in your network to do the same!

Talk to your friends, family, church members, community and civic leaders and let them know that health care reform **MUST** pass. Pass along the toll free number, **1-800-828-0498**, and urge people to make a call to their Congressman AND both US Senators. Tell them:

“We cannot wait any longer for meaningful health reform.
I urge you to pass health care reform and send a bill to President Obama’s desk NOW.”

Questions? Contact Kathy Chan or Sara Howard at 312-491-8161.