

National Coalition on **BENEFITS**

July 22, 2009

The Honorable Mike Ross
2436 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Crowley
2406 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Ross and Rep. Crowley:

The National Coalition on Benefits (NCB) -- comprised of over 185 employers, associations and other organizations representing employers offering health benefits to their employees and other beneficiaries -- applauds the efforts of the Blue Dog Coalition and New Democrat Coalition to work towards a bipartisan health care reform bill that focuses on controlling costs and improving quality. Collectively, America's employers provide health insurance for over 170 million Americans. We share the concerns you have expressed to your leadership on the current House "Tri-Committee" proposal (H.R. 3200), but believe the legislation needs fundamental changes in order to make health care more affordable, reliable and sustainable for all Americans.

Employers are united with the Members of Congress in both parties that understand ever-rising health care costs are threatening the viability of U.S. businesses and job security for millions of Americans. We urge Congress to take all the time that is necessary to enact legislation that will:

- Bend the cost curve for the overall health care system
- Improve the long-term fiscal outlook for federal and state governments
- Produce greater quality and value in our health care system
- Help facilitate our long term economic recovery

Unfortunately, the Tri-Committee bill will not achieve these objectives. Instead, it will make many of the system's current problems even worse. We agree with CBO director Douglas Elmendorf who stated on July 16 that neither the Tri-Committee Bill nor the Senate HELP Committee Bill propose "the sort of fundamental changes that would be necessary to reduce the trajectory of federal

health spending by a significant amount." In fact, he added, "The curve is being raised."

Employers believe Congress cannot achieve reforms unless it refocuses its effort on:

- Preserving the federal uniform ERISA framework and avoiding imposing burdensome new requirements to ERISA
- Payment Reform that focuses on quality and outcomes. Realign incentives to reward high quality, efficient health care; include value-based purchasing, value index, an innovation center for Medicare and Medicaid, and other delivery system reforms
- Comparative effectiveness research that promotes knowledge about health care outcomes without resulting in rationing
- Expansion of Health IT and telemedicine
- Medical malpractice reform
- Guarding against cost-shifting from Government programs to the private sector
- Avoiding taxes and other revenue-raisers that will stifle job creation

We oppose rushing a seriously flawed bill through the House of Representatives. We believe that the time has come to draft a proposal that prioritizes controlling the escalating costs of healthcare in this country as well as incorporating other specific concerns identified by both the Blue Dogs and the New Democrats.

Employers stand ready to assist your efforts to produce legislation that improves the U.S. health care system by enacting strategies that realize President Obama's call to "bend the cost curve on health care" for all Americans.

Sincerely,

The Steering Committee of the National Coalition on Benefits