

HCFANY on National Health Reform

HCFANY is dedicated to winning affordable, quality health care for all residents of New York. Our work around this effort is focused on legislation at the state level. The election of President Obama presents the possibility of federal health reform, which is sure to fundamentally impact state health policy. This has caused us to turn our attention momentarily to Washington D.C.

Several specific issues have arisen in the federal debate that HCFANY believes has serious implications for New York's working families:



New Yorkers will have to speak louder to have their voices heard in Washington.

Guarantee Affordability

Between 2000 and 2007, family health insurance premiums have increased by 81%, whereas median wages have only grown by 11%. By 2009, premiums had increased by 97% from 2000. Health insurance is quickly moving out of reach for more and more families in New York.

Should New Yorkers lose their jobs and seek health insurance elsewhere for themselves or their families, the average yearly cost for insurance on the direct-pay market is much higher in New York than in other states. In New York, average individual premiums are \$12,000 per year, or \$24,000 for a family. These prices constitute 130% of a poor New York family's income; and 44% for a

moderate income family, living at three times the federal poverty line.

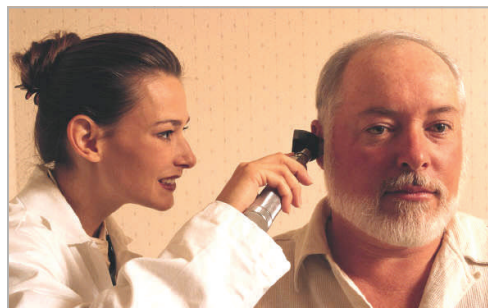
Recently, it seems that some in Washington fail to realize how health reform will affect people in high-cost states, such as New York. This issue is vital because research shows that even modest cost-sharing can deter people from seeking necessary health care. This effect has undoubtedly grown stronger with the onset of the current economic crisis.

In this respect, if any federal health reform proposal is to be successful in addressing the problem of uninsurance, it must first address the issue of affordability. If the government mandates working people to buy unaffordable or stripped down coverage, health reform could seriously backfire.

HCFANY believes that for reform to work for working New Yorkers, federal subsidies must approach 500% of the federal poverty line in the context of an individual mandate system.

“Do-no-harm”

New York leads the nation when it comes to consumer protections in health care. We have “pure community rating,” which bans discrimination by insurance companies based on a person's age, race, gender, or occupation.



A lack of affordable health insurance has turned preventative care into a luxury item for many.



All of New York's working families deserve access to quality, affordable health care.

New York also leads the way in its important benefit mandates, such as prenatal care. Some policymakers are urging the adoption of uniform insurance regulations which could undermine New York's strong protections.

HCFANY urges that any federal insurance law should be a floor, not a ceiling on stronger and more specific State rules.

Immigrant Inclusion

Quality, affordable health care is a necessity for all of New York's working families, regardless of where they stand in the immigration process. In the 1990s, Congress terminated federal matching funding for States which allow eligible legal immigrants to receive public insurance. Federal health reform may not address this issue or the broader issue of how to provide health care for all of the immigrants that work, live, and raise families in the U.S.

HCFANY urges policymakers to include all immigrants in federal health reform. As a first step towards this goal, federal policymakers should restore federal funds for legal immigrants. Health reform should also provide funding to strengthen safety net institutions which serve all New Yorkers who are ineligible for public coverage.