

SUMMARY
**OVER 1,000 VOICES NATIONWIDE FROM PUBLIC HEALTH, WOMEN,
TELL WHITE HOUSE FORUM: WE NEED A PUBLIC HEALTH PLAN**
April 6, 2009

Over 1,000 people from across the U.S. signed EQUAL's petition to "Save Health Reform - Expand Medicare for All," presented to the White House regional forum in California. The outpouring of compelling personal comments demonstrates the need for meaningful reform through a publicly funded health plan like Medicare, and for investments in improving public health. This is the year to take on the special interests who oppose Equitable, Quality, Universal Affordable (EQUAL) Health care, signers said. They urge the President and Congress to listen to voices outside of Washington, D.C.

"Give us an American solution we know and trust. Improve and expand Medicare to make sure everyone in America is covered by this popular, affordable, publicly financed and publicly administered program," petitioners urged President Obama.

"As a registered nurse, I've seen too many patients suffering needlessly because they don't have enough insurance coverage to receive the right treatment," observed a California RN. "It is inhumane to ask health care workers to pick and choose who to treat based on their insurance. The answer is Medicare for all."

"Excluding the 'improved Medicare for all' option from the current health care discussion short-changes the American people," added another California signer.

Advocates for public health, women's health and consumers are the majority of signers. The largest number comes from California, but almost every state is well represented. "We all thank the President for his leadership towards winning national health reform," said Ellen R. Shaffer, Co-Director, Center for Policy Analysis. "We want to help, and we want to be heard."

The petition was presented at the White House regional forum on health reform in Los Angeles, and at satellite meetings in Oakland and San Diego, CA. The petition and all of the signers' comments, sorted by state, are online at:

<http://www.centerforpolicyanalysis.org/id24.html>. Selected comments follow.

Selected Comments

Petition: Save Health Reform - Expand Medicare for All

April 6, 2009

From California

My name is Stephanie. I'm married and 29 years old. I am a tax payer. I go to school, I work and contribute to my community. I am uninsured and I live with a kidney disease. We cannot afford a plan for me. Not to mention that my pre-existing disease would not be covered anyway. My husband and I make too much money to receive any aid. I support single payer health care, and equal access to health care.

Excluding the "improved Medicare for all" option from the current health care discussion short-changes the American people.

As a registered nurse, I've seen too many patients suffering needlessly because they don't have enough insurance coverage to receive the right treatment. It is inhumane to ask health care workers to pick and choose who to treat based on their insurance. The answer is Medicare for all.

To stabilize the economy, we need a health care safety net independent of employment.

As a maternal and child health nurse for 40 years as well as a Professor Emeritus and a school nurse, I know how crucial this is for the health of ALL in our country. Healthy adults/children work, learn, and contribute to society far more effectively than those who are not healthy. Stop the inequities, reduce the disparities.

I emigrated from Canada many years ago but still have many relatives living there. Canada and the U.S. used to be twins on public-health measurements. Now after 35 years of Canadian universal health care, Canadian Infant Mortality is two thirds that of the U.S, Life Expectancy is higher, and the Per Capita Spending is half that in the U.S. A member of our family, in this country, having been hospitalized without benefit of health insurance had to sell their home to pay medical bills.

As a health educator, I know how effective prevention can be. As a person with multiple health issues and employer-based health insurance, I am not satisfied with my current insurance and their continual denials of treatment. I believe that a publicly-funded, publicly accountable, not-for-profit system is the most trustworthy and offers the highest quality.

The lack of an equitable, affordable and universal health care system in the US is a national shame - it squanders prevention and increases human suffering in untold ways. It adds a crushing burden to individuals and their families who are fighting illness. The knowledge is there to build equitable systems that reward healthy outcomes. The only missing ingredient is political leadership.

We do not need piecemeal solutions that are a rehash of what we have that does not work.

Health care should be a right, not a privilege. I went into medicine to help people. I can't do that if Americans are unable to access the health care system.

Florida

47 million Americans are uninsured and that number is growing. As the economy contracts, Americans are losing their job-based insurance, and then losing their jobs. Good health is a right and a responsibility. It depends on access to quality health care. The time to do the right thing is NOW!

Petition: Save Health Reform - Expand Medicare for All

Rekindling Reform

<http://www.rekindlingreform.org>

Center for Policy Analysis 415-922-6204

<http://www.centerforpolicyanalysis.org>

April 6, 2009, p.2
Selected Comments

Georgia

My 3-year-old grandson has cancer. Spent his first year & 1/2 in a hospital. Mom can't leave him to go to work (where she would have) insurance. And I work for insurance, too. Brain injury, heart disease.

Hawaii

Our health care is anything but EQUAL, and for so many it is inadequate, inefficient, or completely unavailable.

Illinois

Many friends of mine have forgone seeing a doctor, afraid of what their bad news might force them to pay. I have skipped seeing a doctor out of fear of the worst news- the cost.

Massachusetts

We need to learn from the rest of the Western nations that have out-performed the US in terms of both cost and, much more importantly, health status. This is an opportunity for really substantial and long overdue reform

It is unconscionable that the US remains the sole wealthy nation in the world that does not provide universal health insurance. The point of health care is taking care of people, not ensuring profits for the health insurance industry. To promote health equity, and redress current health inequities, we need an equitable health care system along with a far greater commitment to funding and supporting public health.

As a primary care internist in a rural area, and a hospital system trustee, I can see the collapse in the safety net.

Maryland

As the sole surviving member of President Kennedy's Medicare task force, I know that Medicare was conceived as a humanitarian program, and as such should be available to all. - **Max Fine**

Maine

...a federal role is essential for innovations in reimbursements for quality care, access to care and cost containment.

A relative of mine alternates dental coverage for her two children so that each kid gets some care. Mostly she prays that they need no dental or medical care.

Michigan

Two of my graduate students have spouses who work for the automotive industry. They wait every day to hear whether their husbands still have a job and health care coverage. Each has two children.

Minnesota

I am a pharmacist of nearly 25 years. The health insurance industry has turned pharmacists into their administrative appendages: we do the billing, claims processing, determine eligibility, and program computers for them, without pay. We want to be health care patient care practitioners, the ultimate reason for the professional existence of pharmacists and other practitioners. A Medicare for All single-payer can solve this crisis.

Selected Comments

Petition: Save Health Reform - Expand Medicare for All

April 6, 2009, p.3

Nevada

No one should ever have to decide whether they can "afford" Medical Attention. No matter what the severity of the condition is, from the common cold to cancer.

Within less than a year after losing my job and healthcare coverage, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Because I am not indigent and share a home with a family member, I did not qualify for assistance from anyone. I had to personally cover all tests and procedures by putting everything on my "high interest" credit card. As if cancer is not bad enough, I had to struggle with the fact that I had huge medical expenses to cover and no job! As a responsible tax paying citizen all my life, I don't think this should have happened to me or should ever happen to anyone again. We need to reform our system. We need to find a way to get these costs off the backs of citizens who need help. Please fight for us!

New Jersey

As a long time health care volunteer and hospital board member, I strongly support equitable health care for all Americans. The system no longer works well for anyone, providers and patients alike.

New Mexico

This is our one great opportunity to make a change in a system that has become way too entrenched, costs way too much, and disserves the people who are paying for it.

New York

This is extremely important to me as there are too many people that fall into the cracks and are not covered. We are our brothers' and sisters' keeper when they cannot acquire this vital care for themselves and their families.

North Carolina

A single payer health plan for all would assist my small business to be more competitive. I currently provide health care for 50 people working for me. The costs only keep rising.

I am a nurse in the admissions department of a long term care facility for AIDS patients. This week, I have had multiple occasions where I had to track down information on patients' insurance to find out if they have coverage and if we can provide the care they need. On many of those same occasions, I discovered that those insurance policies would only cover the patient for "in-network" facilities or that the care is not covered because it is not considered medically necessary (this for a resident who can barely transfer from his wheelchair to the bed). The most tragic thing is when a patient does not get the care they need and deserve because of ridiculous requirements made by managed care. The next thing I find SO discouraging is the amount of time it takes to track down the correct information. Not only that, but actually collecting for the services we provide is tied up in massive amounts of paperwork that is held up by petty requirements for billing, adding to our administrative costs, and increasing the overall cost of providing care. It makes no sense, and we as a country can no longer sustain the insanity.

Ohio

The health and welfare of America is threatened when so many go without proper health care. When this happens, education and the economy also stand in peril. The cost to a family would be less with such a program. This would also make null and void the influence that many lobbyists have in Washington and



Selected Comments

Petition: Save Health Reform - Expand Medicare for All

April 6, 2009, p.4

on state and local governments. It would also cut down on many of our social problems for people would feel more secure.

Pennsylvania

As a primary care physician, I can no longer tolerate the immorality that we have the uninsured and the underinsured. I also cannot justify diverting health care dollars to insurance companies who provide no added value.

Rhode Island

I work with too many people who end up without insurance due to losing a job. Meanwhile, people with jobs have to fight to retain their benefits. 9 months of COBRA at 1/3 cost is helpful, but is not a permanent solution. We need a plan to ensure that everyone has coverage.

Texas

As I am 62, unemployed and have no health insurance. This coverage would bring considerable comfort to me.

It is absolutely essential that we reform the health care system so that every American has access to primary care and prevention services through health insurance and other means. It is also vital that the public health system at the federal, state, and local level be better funded if the overall health status of Americans is to be improved and the costs of our system reduced.

Virginia

My career is about reducing health disparities. The system is broken and health care rapidly is becoming a luxury item. The costs of under-insured and uninsured affect everyone. It is critical that we have a system that is equitable for all.

Washington

We would greatly reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies if women had access to affordable, quality healthcare. This includes, of course, providing women with cheap birth control that can be easily accessed at any pharmacy or clinic, regardless of insurance carrier. If you want to rid this country of culture wars, you must enact policy that makes sense fiscally, pragmatically and morally. Stop putting women's health at risk by not stemming health care costs that are spiraling out of control. Thank you, President Obama.

I'm 64, uninsured, I have worked since I began delivering newspapers at age 12. When my husband of 27 years divorced me because he realized he was gay, away went the insurance. I have worked almost exclusively for non-profits, hence no insurance or pension plans. Hospitalized in Oct. 2008 with "random virus" (not flu). Trying to pay \$4,000 physician bills, just got \$16,000 bill from hospital. Have about 20 more years of house payments so selling house in this market not a good plan. I work 40 hrs/week in hospice and eldercare--just took second job caring for an infant 12 hrs a week to help pay house taxes and medical bills. I feel I have worked for the good of society most of my life, and deserve better than this.

Even with "good" insurance I have spent large blocks of my life fighting for approval of coverage for essential medical care for family members. I have had a relative die directly from refusal of care during an emergency because he was uninsured. I watch my children with good professional jobs struggle month to month to cover their medical bills. I want my grandchildren to learn about "for profit" health insurance companies by reading about them in their history books -- in the same chapter with debtors' prisons and poor farms.