

June 21, 2010

The Honorable Adrian Fenty
Mayor of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable David Catania
District of Columbia City Council
Chairperson, Committee on Health
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 404
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
District of Columbia City Council
Chairperson, Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 110
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Fenty, Councilmember Catania and Councilmember Bowser:

We are the District of Columbia Coalition on Health Care Reform, a coalition of organizations who represent consumers and providers participating in public and private health insurance programs in the District of Columbia. We write to give you our combined views regarding the opportunities presented with health care reform and the implementation of the new federal health care reform law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). We want to offer our support and expertise to assist the District in the important task of implementing health care reform, sharing the goal of building a comprehensive, simplified health care system in which no one is left without access to care and improving health outcomes for all District residents.

We commend the District for making access to health care a major priority for the District government long before federal health care reform was enacted. Instead of cutting back on Medicaid, as other states are doing, the District is expanding Medicaid income eligibility four years before it is required to do so, proposing higher income eligibility limits than are required under the PPACA and providing full Medicaid benefits to those who are newly eligible. These efforts are laudable and have positioned the District as a national leader in ensuring that District residents have access to affordable health care. This leadership is even more commendable given the tough budget pressures the District is facing.

As the Mayor and Council have acknowledged, in implementing the PPACA, coordination, collaboration, and partnership across government agencies, and between agencies and the provider and consumer communities will be critical. Health care reform need not increase the complexity of the health care system – though it could without careful planning. Rather, it provides an unprecedented opportunity for development of a unified system encompassing all of the public payor options, *i.e.* Medicaid, safety net programs, expansions, and the soon to be created Health Exchange.

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The undersigned organizations urge the District to create a health care system that ensures that: (1) consumers can easily access benefits through a single point of entry system, and (2) providers can deliver high quality care assured of prompt and reasonable payments.

To that end, we propose that the following principles guide the District as it moves forward in its implementation of the PPACA:

- **Principle 1:** The District should have a coordinated policy development and implementation plan allowing for all affected District agencies and critical stakeholders to provide input.
- **Principle 2:** The District should ensure that no one loses coverage as a result of health care reform implementation and that all individuals can access quality, affordable health care safely.
- **Principle 3:** The District should streamline its eligibility rules and processes for public insurance and the Exchange.
- **Principle 4:** Any money saved through the implementation of the PPACA should be reinvested into the health care system.

We discuss each of these principles in greater detail in the attachment to this letter and offer initial recommendations designed to work toward that achievement.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. As always, we stand ready to assist the District in implementing health care reform and ensure that District residents receive the benefits of the PPACA. Please feel free to contact Jennifer Mezey of the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia at 202-661-5962, Erin Loubier of the Whitman-Walker Clinic at 202-939-7662 or Howard Liebers of the District of Columbia Primary Care Association at 202-638-0252 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

AARP Legal Counsel for the Elderly
The Arc of the District of Columbia, Inc.
Ayuda
Bread for the City
Children's Law Center
Community of Hope
District Alliance for Safe Housing, Inc.
District of Columbia Behavioral Health Association
District of Columbia Coalition of Providers for Persons with
Intellectual and Other Disabilities
District of Columbia Coalition on Long Term Care
District of Columbia Fiscal Policy Institute
District of Columbia Primary Care Association
Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project
(DV LEAP)
Entrepreneurs United

GWU Health Insurance Counseling Project
Health Committee of the District of Columbia Language
Access Coalition
La Clinica del Pueblo
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia
Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care
National Multiple Sclerosis (or MS) Society, National
Capital Chapter
Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities
Sasha Bruce Youthwork
So Others Might Eat (SOME)
University Legal Services
Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
We Are Family Senior Outreach Network
Whitman-Walker Clinic
The Women's Collective

CC: The Honorable Vincent C. Gray
District of Columbia City Council Chairman
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The Honorable Tommy Wells
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