

January 13, 2010

Dear Senator Nelson and Senator Johanns,

Congress is closer than ever to providing quality, affordable health care to everyone. The reform bills passed in the House and the Senate make important changes to our broken health care system which will help all Nebraskans, including the 224,000 who do not have access to health care today.

But if reform is going to be successful, it must make coverage truly affordable. This overarching goal – making health care affordable and accessible to all Americans – is thwarted if people are required to purchase coverage that costs too much and offers too little.

As you work with your colleagues to merge the final bill, we encourage you to combine the best affordability and coverage provisions from both bills to ensure that health insurance is affordable for low and moderate income Nebraskans.

We strongly support the House provisions which extend coverage to 36 million Americans – compared to 31 million in the Senate – and set premiums and out-of-pocket costs at levels that are more affordable for low and moderate income families, particularly those under 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). These provisions do a better job of protecting lower income working families. The Senate, however, does a slightly better job than the House in making coverage affordable for moderate income families (those with incomes *above* 250% of the FPL). We urge Congress to take the best provisions from each bill – the House provisions that cover more uninsured and create more affordable coverage for families under 250% of FPL and the Senate provisions which make coverage more affordable for families above 250% FPL.

The undersigned organizations and leaders may not agree on every aspect of reform and we are not collectively endorsing every aspect of the previously passed House and Senate bills. But, we recognize that affordable health care coverage is the key to real reform.

Therefore, we strongly urge Congress to merge the best affordability provisions from the House and Senate bills and guarantee that comprehensive health care reform makes health insurance both accessible and affordable for all Nebraskans.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Aryeh Azriel
Congregation Temple Israel

Mike Marvin, State Lead
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