



Great Public Schools for Every Student

NEA Strongly Supports Comprehensive Health Insurance Reform *Great Public Schools Depend on Quality, Affordable Health Care for All* *August 2009*

OVERALL MESSAGE

NEA supports health insurance reform that helps to guarantee that every person in America has quality, affordable health care coverage. We urge Congress to pass health insurance reform legislation that protects what works in our current system and fixes what's broken.

BACKGROUND

More than 47 million people in this country—including 9 million children—have no health insurance—and with the economy in a downturn, more lose coverage every day. In 2008, health insurance for a family of four cost more than \$12,000 a year, on average, and the cost continues to rise much faster today than inflation. America's ailing health care system is in desperate need of reform. The public overwhelmingly supports health care reform, and it can't wait another year. Congress needs to act now to pass health care legislation that *protects what works* and *fixes what's broken*.

Not all NEA members can afford health insurance

The majority of NEA members are fortunate to have health insurance, but we know that some Association members can't afford the premiums and are forced to go without insurance. And we know that despite available health insurance programs, many public school students fall outside the safety net. We know, beyond any doubt, that students can't learn if they come to school sick.

Why health insurance reform is an issue of concern to NEA

NEA has a long history of standing up for workers and their families. We believe that everyone should have quality, affordable health care coverage. Health insurance reform is an issue that affects our members, and in reality, it affects the future of our nation. Students who can't get the health care services they need run the risk of falling behind in school and being unprepared to contribute more fully to the economic and social well-being of our global society.

Members of Congress are meeting with constituents and soliciting input on the important issue of health insurance reform. We encourage you to use the talking points below to urge your member of Congress to work and vote for comprehensive health insurance reform legislation that guarantees quality, affordable health insurance coverage for everyone.

MESSAGES

Everyone should have access to quality, affordable health care

- Providing quality and affordable health care to everyone is essential to controlling spiraling health care costs. Those who currently have health insurance continue to see their costs rise, their choices limited, and their benefits and coverage reduced.
- As health care costs continue to rise, families are worried about losing the very parts of their health insurance plan that they value most—choice of doctors, hospitals, insurance plans, and the sense of security that comes from knowing that they are covered if some catastrophic illness occurs.
- The lack of quality, affordable health care creates a serious impediment to student learning.
- Health insurance reform is an essential element of great public schools. Students can't learn if they come to school sick.
- Students with access to quality, affordable health care are more likely to be healthy and living in a home environment that helps to facilitate learning.

Health insurance reform legislation should build on and strengthen our existing employer-based system

- Health reform must allow people to keep the insurance plan they have if they like it.
- Real health care reform must guarantee a choice of plans and providers through private health insurance plans (including those that employees may currently have through their employer) or a public health insurance plan option.
- A public health insurance plan option will help keep private insurance plans honest, provide competition, and help improve the quality of care for everyone.

Health insurance reform legislation must be passed this year

- We cannot wait another year for health insurance reform.
- Families and individuals are being crushed by escalating health care costs.
- Doing nothing to reform health insurance will ultimately result in Americans losing the choices they value most.
- The public overwhelmingly approves of, and recognizes the urgency of, health care reform.

Why NEA cares about health insurance reform

- NEA has a long history of standing up for equal rights for all people. Quality, affordable health care is a moral imperative.
- NEA believes that the future of our nation is dependent on healthy individuals and families.
- Many public school employees have traded salary increases for the long-term security of a comprehensive health insurance plan.
- Reducing or taxing health care benefits unfairly penalizes workers.
- Taxing health care benefits would discourage highly qualified professionals from entering or staying in education.
- Quality, affordable health care for public school educators must be protected. As school districts look to cut costs, educators' health insurance coverage is often on the chopping block.