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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

J. MICHAEL MYERS, STAFF DIRECTOR AND CHIEF COUNSEL
FRANK J. MACCHIAROLA, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

June 16, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We share your desire to enact health care reform this year. Health care reform legislation will affect every single American, and we will need to have an open and honest debate on how to tackle these complex issues. We must get these issues right.

In the speech you gave to the American Medical Association yesterday, you assured the audience that under your health care reform proposals, Americans who like the health care plans they have now can keep them. You asserted that anyone who says otherwise is either trying to mislead people or does not have their facts straight.

As the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee prepares to consider the Kennedy-Dodd health care reform bill, we wanted to call to your attention the preliminary analysis by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

According to CBO, the Kennedy-Dodd bill would cause 10 million Americans to lose their employer-based health insurance, because their employers will no longer offer coverage. CBO also projects that the Kennedy-Dodd bill would come with an enormous price tag – over \$1 trillion – but would only expand coverage by 16 million Americans. That is barely one-third of the total population of uninsured Americans.

As the debate on health care reform reaches this critical phase, we are increasingly concerned that this bill costs too much, covers too few, and causes many Americans to lose the coverage they have now. It does not meet the important benchmark that you set, and with which we strongly agree – if you like the health care plan you have, you can keep it.

We need a health care reform bill that will reduce health care costs, improve quality, and ensure that every American has access to the care they need. The facts show that the Kennedy-Dodd bill will not meet those standards. In light of this CBO analysis, we hope that we can work together to change the bill, so that we can accomplish your stated goal of allowing every American who likes their current health insurance to keep it and provide coverage for every American.

If we work together, we still hope that we can draft a truly bipartisan bill that can get the support of at least 75 to 80 Senators. For a bill to work and have the confidence of the American people, it will need that level of broad support.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on this critical issue.

Respectfully,


Michael B. Enzi, Ranking Member


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