

# PUBLICCITIZEN

Robert Weissman, President

October 30, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker,

On behalf of Public Citizen's 150,000 members and supporters, I am writing to urge, as the health care reform legislation moves forward, that the House leadership permit a floor vote on a Medicare-for-All single payer health program, via an amendment that Representative Weiner would introduce; and, that the Kucinich amendment waiving ERISA requirements for states adopting a Medicare-for-All single payer health program be included in the manager's amendment.

As you know, a Medicare-for-All single payer health program offers advantages not available under other health care reform proposals. As the President has indicated, it is the only possible means to ensure everyone in the United States has health care coverage; everyone in and nobody out. It avoids any allocation of care based on income, wealth or job status, and instead delivers care as a matter of right. Given that 35,000 - 45,000 people die every year in the United States from lack of coverage, achieving genuinely universal coverage is a life-and-death matter. In a Medicare-for-All system, no one is denied treatment because they can't pay. No one is mandated to buy coverage. No one is denied coverage because of pre-existing conditions. No one goes bankrupt paying medical bills.

A Medicare-for-All single payer health program also provides savings that other reform approaches cannot match. The best estimates are that it would save \$350 billion - \$400 billion *a year* (or as much as \$4 trillion over the 10-year period of Congressional Budget Office estimates), by eliminating the massive bureaucratic waste caused by the private insurance industry. There is no way to capture these savings except by replacing the private insurance industry.

Unfortunately, the debate on Capitol Hill has evolved without serious consideration of the Medicare-for-All single payer health proposal. There are many reasons for this, but one is that many who actually support Medicare-for-All have claimed that the proposal is "not feasible."

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Page Two

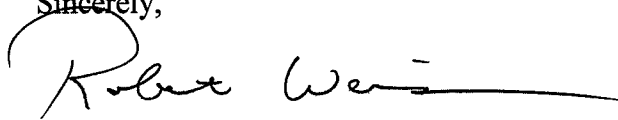
With the House leadership having settled on a single proposal, now is the time to set aside worries about feasibility. The internal House process is resolved. Members should have the opportunity to vote up-or-down on Medicare-for-All single payer health proposal. As you know, Representative Weiner has proposed to introduce such a measure on the House floor in the form of an amendment. We urge you to let this amendment be introduced on the floor, and to allow and encourage Members to vote their beliefs and conscience on the Medicare-for-All single payer health proposal.

With a new, reformed national system in place, states may still wish to implement their own Medicare-for-All single payer health initiatives, to obtain for themselves the unique benefits of such a system. Representative Kucinich introduced an amendment in the House Education and Labor Committee to facilitate such action, by providing for waivers of ERISA requirements for states adopting single payer plans. This amendment passed the Committee with bipartisan support. We urge you to incorporate it into the leadership bill, through the vehicle of a manager's amendment.

Please contact us if we can provide any additional information on these matters.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Weissman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert Weissman  
President