



815 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

RICHARD L. TRUMKA  
PRESIDENT

ELIZABETH H. SHULER  
SECRETARY-TREASURER

ARLENE HOLT BAKER  
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

## ***LEGISLATIVE ALERT!***

(202) 637-5057

November 2, 2009

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I am writing to urge you to support the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962), which the House is scheduled to consider later this week. We believe H.R. 3962 deserves the support of every member of Congress.

Our health care system is in crisis. Health care costs are spinning out of control, placing an unsustainable burden on working families, businesses, and governments. Meanwhile, over 46 million people in this country have no health insurance at all.

We have been talking about guaranteeing affordable health care for every American for over 70 years. We have been debating President Obama's proposals to reform our health care system for nearly two years. Congress has been vigorously debating reform legislation for the past ten months. The time for talking has long since passed. We cannot afford to postpone solutions any longer.

H.R. 3962 would make high-quality affordable health care a reality for millions of U.S. families, expanding coverage to 96 percent of legal U.S. residents while taking steps to rein in health care costs, stopping myriad insurance company abuses, and reducing the deficit by \$104 billion over the first 10 years.

H.R. 3962 provides for a public health insurance option that would be available to small businesses and uninsured individuals in every state through a new national insurance exchange. We believe firms with more than 100 employees should also be able to purchase coverage through the exchange, which would allow more and more workers to choose from among public and private plan options. A public option available to more workers would help reduce skyrocketing health care costs by holding insurance companies accountable and forcing them to compete.

H.R. 3962 also includes other strong tools to lower costs over the long term. It restructures old-style Medicare demonstration projects into pilot projects that, if successful, could be expanded throughout Medicare on an accelerated timeline. It also targets the expense of preventable Medicare hospitalizations and provides benchmarks for implementing new models of care that will shift public programs from being volume-based to value-based.

These are the kind of very important and innovative cost containment methodologies that private purchasers are anxious to apply in the private sector. These delivery system reforms enjoy strong support from business and consumer organizations because they recognize that only the federal government can develop and test such new strategies.

H.R. 3962 would require large and medium-sized firms to provide insurance to their employees or otherwise share in the financing of health care coverage. This employer responsibility requirement would not only expand coverage and ensure that businesses contribute their fair share, but would also prevent free rider firms from driving up costs for everyone by dumping their employees into subsidized programs.

Unfortunately, H.R. 3962 exempts too many businesses from the employer responsibility requirement. As a result, it would disadvantage small firms that have done the right thing for years by providing quality health care for their employees.

Finally, H.R. 3962 would establish a \$10 billion temporary reinsurance program to help employers and other entities continue to provide health coverage for pre-Medicare retirees, providing greater protection for this vulnerable population.

H.R. 3962 would finance reform by asking the wealthiest people in this country to pay their fair share, while protecting working Americans from a tax on their health care benefits. The fair financing elements of H.R. 3962 should be maintained in the final legislation that comes out of conference committee to ensure we do not finance reform on the backs of working families.

In the coming weeks, working families will continue to reach out to our friends, families, and neighbors to build support for this bill, and to ask members of Congress to help push health care reform over the finish line. This week we are urging you to vote in favor of H.R. 3962.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Samuel', written in a cursive style.

William Samuel, Director  
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT