



## National Health Council

1730 M Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036-4561 • 202-785-3910 • [www.nationalhealthcouncil.org](http://www.nationalhealthcouncil.org) • [info@nhcouncil.org](mailto:info@nhcouncil.org)

### NEWS RELEASE

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#### Contacts:

Nancy Hughes, [nhughes@nhcouncil.org](mailto:nhughes@nhcouncil.org), 202-973-0550

Emily Noonan, [enoonan@nhcouncil.org](mailto:enoonan@nhcouncil.org), 202-973-0552

### LEADING PATIENT ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS UNITED ON HEALTH CARE REFORM PRINCIPLES

(Washington, DC) – Forty-eight leading national patient organizations have called on President Obama and members of Congress to enact health care reform legislation that guarantees effective and affordable health and long-term care coverage for all Americans.

In a statement issued today, the chief executives of the patient groups specifically urged that reform legislation

- cover everyone
- curb costs responsibly
- abolish exclusions for pre-existing conditions
- eliminate lifetime caps, and
- ensure long-term and end-of-life care.

“We believe that the health care system can be both effective and affordable for everyone when it provides more coordinated care, improves patient outcomes that lower costs to society, and keeps pace with biomedical innovation,” said National Health Council President Myrl Weinberg. “Access, affordability, innovation, and high quality care should be the benchmarks for health care in America.”

Weinberg stressed that as Congress debates health care reform “they must take into consideration one of the leading health care cost drivers – people with chronic diseases and disabilities. They are different from average consumers who are generally in good health and sporadic users of the health care system. People diagnosed with chronic conditions interact with the health care system their entire lives.”

The organizations that signed the joint statement are all members of the National Health Council (NHC), the only organization of its kind that brings together all segments of the health care community to provide a united voice for the more than 133 million people with chronic diseases and disabilities and their family caregivers.

(more)

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In addition to issuing the statement, the NHC has provided specific recommendations to the Senate Finance Committee and its staff as the Committee develops its version of a health care reform package.

These activities are part of the NHC's ongoing initiative known as the Campaign to Put Patients First. "Putting Patients First<sup>®</sup> means creating a modern health care system that saves lives, enhances our quality of life, and saves us all money," Weinberg explained. In addition to capturing the support of the patient advocacy organizations, the NHC is collecting signatures and personal stories from individual patients in support of the statement's five principles for health care reform.

**About the National Health Council:**

The National Health Council (NHC) membership is made up of approximately 115 health-related organizations and corporations, including approximately 50 of the nation's leading patient advocacy groups, such as the American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association, Prevent Blindness America, and Spina Bifida Association. Other members include professional and membership associations, nonprofit organizations with an interest in health, and major pharmaceutical, medical device, and biotechnology companies.

**Key Facts:**

- In 2005, 133 million people had at least one chronic condition.--  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/overview.htm>
- By 2025, chronic diseases will affect an estimated 164 million Americans, nearly half the U.S. population – <http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/chronicbook2002.pdf>
- Chronic diseases account for more than 75 percent of the nation's \$2 trillion medical care costs – <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/overview.htm>
- Chronic diseases account for 70 percent of all deaths in the United States –  
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/overview.htm>

**Links:**

- National Health Council – [www.nationalhealthcouncil.org](http://www.nationalhealthcouncil.org)
- Copy of statement to the President and Congress --  
[http://www.nationalhealthcouncil.org/NHC\\_Files/Pdf\\_Files/ToPresidentandCongress\\_06-01-09.pdf](http://www.nationalhealthcouncil.org/NHC_Files/Pdf_Files/ToPresidentandCongress_06-01-09.pdf)
- Copies of NHC health reform policy letters to the U.S. Senate Finance Committee –  
<http://www.nationalhealthcouncil.org/pages/public-policy.php?id=2>
- Campaign to Put Patients First – [www.puttingpatientsfirst.net](http://www.puttingpatientsfirst.net)
- NHC's Five Principals of Health Care – <http://nationalhealthcouncil.org/forms/5-healthcare-principals.pdf>