

WPHA Resolution on Health Care Reform, 2009

Whereas 46 million Americans are currently uninsured, and millions more pay a high deductible or co-pay for catastrophic coverage and;

Whereas the cost of health care in general in the United States is increasing at a rate that will cause financial difficulty and deny access to healthcare for millions more Americans and;

Whereas the current health system reimburses providers for the number of procedures performed, not the ability to prevent disease;

Therefore, be it resolved that with Wisconsin Public Health Association adopt the American Public Health Association position on health care reform, as stated below:

Reform Health Care Coverage and Delivery

We must ensure coverage for quality, affordable health care for all. This means covering the over 46 million uninsured, and improving the quality and safety of the health care system, including building a modern health information infrastructure.

Comprehensive health care coverage for all. All people living in this country should have comprehensive benefits, including evidence-based clinical preventive services, management of chronic diseases and conditions, behavioral health, dental and vision care, and reproductive health services, without restrictions in coverage due to pre-existing conditions.

Strong public programs. Public programs serve vital functions in our health system. Safety net programs such as public health clinics and Veterans Administration health services provide direct services for particular populations that cannot be replaced by private providers. As people move from the rolls of the underinsured and uninsured, we must strengthen funding for these public programs to assure that patients do not fall through the cracks. In addition, strengthening and expanding public insurance programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and CHIP builds on what works best in our system. As a starting point, Medicare, which is consistently scored as the most efficient insurance program for health coverage, should be expanded as a coverage option for all.

Access to affordable and high-quality health care for all. Health reform must strengthen the health service delivery system to ensure access to timely, appropriate, culturally competent and affordable high quality health care services, and create an equitable distribution of resources nationwide. A fundamental shift in reimbursement and other policies that promote primary care is also required to ensure individuals are given the best opportunity for disease prevention or treatment at the earliest opportunity. A continued investment in health information technology that promotes achieving care of the highest quality, safety and efficiency is required.

First dollar support for evidence-based clinical preventive services. Clinical preventive services are critical for long-term health and wellness. There are clear data indicating which clinical preventive services are most effective, but barriers still exist to providing and accessing these

services. High priority, age appropriate, evidence-based clinical preventive services must be provided with no co-pays or co-insurance in all public and private health insurance programs.

Expand the public health and primary care workforce. Health reform legislation must significantly increase support and funding for programs that provide loan repayments, scholarships and other grants for the training of public health personnel, primary care physicians, nurses and other health providers. It must also improve the distribution and diversity of health professionals in medically underserved communities, as well as ensure there is a capable health work force able to provide care for all Americans and respond to the growing demands of our aging and increasingly diverse population.

In addition, be it resolved that WPHA would like to add additional criteria to the APHA position on health care reform that incorporates health equity in the language of any health reform initiatives, such that:

Address the Social Determinants of Health. Inform policy-makers and the general public that health care accounts for only a small fraction of what determines health outcomes. If Americans' overall health outcomes are to become competitive with other developed countries, steps must be taken beyond the health care reform principles outlined above. Broader discussions and policy that addresses poverty, education, employment, and a variety of other social determinants of health that, when taken together, actually have a stronger influence than health care on whether people can be healthy and stay healthy in the first place.

Submitted to WPHA on September 14, 2009 by Eric Gass, PhD, Chair, Policy Development and Review Committee.

For more information about APHA's position on Health Care Reform, please see the PHACT Campaign Website at: <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/tips/PHACT+Campaign.htm>