

## MEMORANDUM

June 15, 2009

To: AAP Chapter Presidents  
AAP Chapter Vice Presidents  
AAP Chapter Executive Directors

Fr: Erin Howard, Assistant Director of Public Affairs and Member Advocacy

Cc: AAP Executive Committee  
Dr. Olson Huff  
Dr. Molly Droge  
Dr. Jay Berkelhamer  
Jackie Noyes  
Bob Hall, JD, MPAff  
Claire Bornstein  
Judy Dolins  
Jim Pawelski  
Dan Walter

Re: Federal Health Care Reform Update

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We apologize for the delay in sending out the update, the Academy server was down all day Friday.

As you can imagine, last week was another very busy week for health care reform. On Monday, June 8th Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), who has been chairing the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) while Senator Kennedy (D-MA) receives treatment for cancer, introduced the HELP Committee's health reform legislation (all 615 pages of it!).

We were pleased to see that HELP recognizes the unique needs of children; the legislation specifically references the need to promote prevention early in life and includes language that proposes using Bright Futures as the pediatric appropriate model for preventive services. The Washington office has been working closely with HELP Committee staff to ensure that the needs of children are included in the legislation, and will be sending comments to the Committee later today.

Additionally, Dr. Judith Palfrey, President-Elect of the Academy, testified before the HELP Committee on Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. Please visit the Academy's website to read her testimony (<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/washing/testimo.htm>). Academy staff will continue to work with the Senate Finance Committee and the House of Representatives to ensure that all children receive the care they need and deserve.

On Thursday President Obama hosted his first of what will be several town hall meetings to make his case for a health care overhaul directly to the American people. In Green Bay, WI he defended his call for a government-sponsored health plan to compete with private insurers. President Obama believes that, “if the private insurance companies have to compete with a public option, it will keep them honest and it will help keep their prices down” (*New York Times*, 6/12/09). With cost-containment a number one priority for the Administration, they see the public plan as one option to control and reduce health care spending.

While some Democrats in Congress support the inclusion of a public plan option (Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Chair of the Senate Finance Health Subcommittee, introduced his own public plan option on Wednesday) other Democrats (including the Chair of the Finance Committee), many Republicans and outside groups like the AMA have voiced concern and opposition to the public option. They worry that a public plan could disrupt the current health system, thwart the goal of garnering bipartisan support, or even threaten the overall success of the legislation.

House and Senate leaders have released their plans for the next several weeks:

Although this may change, the Senate and House of Representatives Committees are scheduled to release their health care reform drafts this week and next. The HELP Committee will convene the first hearing Wednesday to begin full Committee debate on how to craft legislation. The Senate Finance Committee plans to release their draft document on June 17<sup>th</sup>, with a final version available on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Baucus will convene the first Finance Committee hearing on Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The House of Representatives plans to introduce their health care reform proposal later this week. Committee leaders have been very clear that they intend to stick to their timeline, and House leadership has indicated that they plan to vote on legislation before they adjourn for the August recess (tentatively scheduled for August 7<sup>th</sup>).

Now is the time to get involved! While the Washington office meets with Congressional staff regarding the needs of children in the legislation, your members of Congress need to hear directly from you at home. The Fourth of July recess (June 29<sup>th</sup>-July 6<sup>th</sup>) is a perfect opportunity to advocate on behalf of the children in your state while your Senators and Representative are home for the recess.

Please consider contacting your district offices as soon as possible to schedule a meeting for the recess. We will be sending out talking points shortly. Please feel free to share your experiences with your Congressmen. As pediatricians you know first hand the implications of uninsurance and inappropriate care on children and families. We are here to support you, and are more than willing to provide you with the materials you need. Please contact Claire Bornstein ([cbornstein@aap.org](mailto:cbornstein@aap.org)) or Erin Howard ([ehoward@aap.org](mailto:ehoward@aap.org)) if you have any questions.

We look forward to working with you this summer!

