

HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA NOW!

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Five Baltimore Members of Congress Sign Onto Health Care For America Now

*All Five Members of Congress from Metro Baltimore Commit To
Guarantee of Quality, Affordable Health Care For All*

Baltimore, MD – All five members of Congress from metropolitan Baltimore took Halloween morning as their opportunity to declare that they are unafraid to take on the challenge of guaranteeing quality, affordable health care for all Americans as they signed the [Health Care for America Now](#) (HCAN) statement taking the side of quality, affordable health care for all and opposed to leaving Americans on their own with unregulated health insurance. The five were:

- Rep. Elijah Cummings
- Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
- Rep. John Sarbanes
- Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin
- Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski

See the "Which Side Are You On?" statement: http://hcfan.3cdn.net/517370ec1fddf45044_vbm6ivw3d.pdf

"Health Care for America Now's goal this year is to get the next President and a majority of Congress committed to the principles of quality, affordable health care for all and opposed to policies that would tax our benefits at work and leave us on our own with the unregulated, bureaucratic private insurance industry," said Matthew Weinstein, Federal Issues Director for Progressive Maryland and state coordinator of Health Care for America Now. "With these signatures, we are taking a major step towards getting the next President and Congress to make comprehensive health care reform a priority in 2009."

America's broken health insurance system kills 18,000 Americans every year – one every half-hour – according to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. Millions more endure the struggles faced by average workers like Valerie Henry of the United Workers Association, who spoke of her personal experiences at the press conference: "Health care is a

human right, but I am forced to make the tough choices about whether to pay for my prescription and medical bills or pay for rent, food and other necessities.”

According to the Baltimore Sun last week, “The number of Marylanders without health insurance showed a decrease small enough to be considered statistically insignificant. Last year, 762,000 people didn't have health insurance, or 13.7 percent of the population, compared with 776,000 in 2006, or 13.8 percent of Marylanders.” According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 45.7 million Americans were uninsured last year, compared to 38.4 million in 2000, a 19% increase.

The HCAN statement asks members of Congress to choose between two very different prescriptions for health care reform with specific, contrasting policies. Since mid-August, [125 members of Congress](#), including Senator Barack Obama (D-IL), have committed to the HCAN principles of quality, affordable health care and rejected the idea of taxing health benefits and pushing people on their own into a deregulated private health insurance market.

Health Care for America Now (HCAN) is a national grassroots campaign bringing together millions of individuals and more than [425 organizations](#) with the clear goal of winning comprehensive health care reform in 2009. The broad-based coalition is made up of community-based organizations, unions, women's groups, doctors, nurses, patient advocates, small businesses, faith-based groups, think tanks, and leading grassroots activists.

On July 8, 2008, the \$40 million [HCAN campaign launched](#) in Washington, DC, Annapolis, and over 50 cities nationwide, including 38 state capitals. Over the past several months, supporters in 40 states have been holding grassroots actions to expose the bad practices of an industry that makes money by putting profits ahead of people's health. HCAN's ongoing outreach involves asking individuals, organizations, businesses, and members of Congress: "Which Side Are You On?" – the side of quality, affordable health care for all or the side of leaving us alone to fend for ourselves in the bureaucratic, unregulated insurance market? 125 Senators and Representatives have signed on so far. In Maryland, HCAN will be holding another similar event next month in Montgomery or Prince George's County with members of Congress from that part of the state.

Health Care for America Now ("HCAN"), a section 501(c)(4) issue advocacy organization, is a broad coalition of nonprofit and political organizations that are working to promote quality, affordable health care for all Americans. HCAN and each of its members conducts and funds only activities appropriate to its tax and election law status.

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Statements from Members of Congress

Rep. Elijah Cummings:

“A strong and moral nation cannot deny any human being the health care that will prolong or save their life. Universal access to high quality care must be a top priority.”

Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger:

"High-quality, affordable health care is out of reach for millions of Marylanders. We must expand access to affordable health care, invest in medical technologies that save lives and dollars, teach children and families how to live healthy lifestyles, and encourage health professionals to stay in Maryland to address the shortage of primary care providers."

Rep. John Sarbanes:

"I will continue to fight until all Americans have access to adequate and affordable health coverage. The President's intransigence over the past eight years is yet another thumb in the eye for families who work hard and play by the rules to get ahead, but find themselves one hospital visit away from a dire financial situation. America's current healthcare system needs to be fixed."

Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin:

"I look forward to a new Congress and Administration committed to ensuring that all Americans have access to affordable health care. I commend Health Care for America Now for uniting community leaders, business leaders, and public officials in an effort to make universal health care a reality."

Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski:

"Health care costs are skyrocketing, and becoming out of reach for so many hard-working Americans. I will keep fighting in the United States Senate to change this and to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable health care because I believe that health care is a right and not a privilege—for the privileged few. I look forward to working with a new Congress and new Administration that is committed to providing Americans the quality, affordable health care they need and deserve."

Statements from HCAN partners in Maryland

Terry Cavanagh, Executive Director, Maryland State Council, Service Employees International Union (SEIU):

“It’s simply unacceptable for hardworking families across the country to continue to suffer the consequences of a broken health care system. Today, we’re issuing a challenge to lawmakers to stand with us in the fight for quality, affordable health care for all—and we’re prepared to hold those same elected leaders accountable to their word long after the polls close on November 4.”

Patrick Moran, Director of American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) - Maryland:

"The cost of health care for average families is skyrocketing. Meanwhile, insurance company profits have risen more than one thousand percent-- in just the last five years. That's why

AFSCME has taken a leading role in the HCAN campaign. AFSCME members realize that whether you have health insurance -- or not -- the system is not working. It is time to have a system of quality care that is affordable and maintains choice."

Tim Goins, Vice President and Director of Political and Legislative Affairs, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 27:

"In every contract negotiation we're involved in, health care costs are the #1 issue. Workers are getting hit with big increases in their out-of-pocket health care expenses, plus they're giving up wage increases in order to keep their health care benefits. We need a solution that gets workers the health care benefits their families need at a price they can afford."

Betty Weller, Vice President, Maryland State Teachers Association:

"MSTA, representing 70,000 teachers, support staff and other educators across Maryland, is a proud member of the Health Care for America Now campaign. As educators we understand that healthy children are better prepared for learning. Children who live in households with high poverty, frequent unemployment, and inadequate health care often have greater difficulty learning in school. Children cannot learn when they suffer from illnesses or lack of proper dental or eye care, or are absent from school due to lack of treatment of a common illness. Health insurance that provides timely and adequate health care treatment will strengthen families and help to reduce some of the barriers that children and educators face as together they pursue a quality education. We are delighted that these five Maryland leaders have signed on to the HCAN campaign, demonstrating their commitment to fighting for quality, affordable health care for all of Maryland's children and families."

Dr. Ari Silver-Isenstadt, MD, MEd, National Physicians Alliance:

"The National Physicians Alliance finds it is shameful that America is the only country in the industrialized world that does not guarantee health care to all of its citizens. Every day, we see patients who have delayed care for financial reasons and gotten sicker for it. Too often we watch people suffer and die who could have been comforted and cured. As doctors across medical specialties, we support the option of a public plan for everyone, and we support regulation of the private insurance industry-especially regulation of the egregious 'pre-existing condition' clauses that deny people precisely the coverage they most need."

Fred Mason, Executive Director, Md-DC AFL-CIO:

"We applaud these five members of Congress for joining our grassroots campaign to help guarantee quality, affordable health care that we all can count on."

Other speakers included:

Vincent DeMarco, President, Maryland Citizens Health Initiative

John Nugent, Executive Director, Planned Parenthood of Maryland

Glen Middleton, Executive Director, AFSCME Council 67