

HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA NOW!

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\$40 Million Health Care Campaign Launched in Maryland and Nationwide

*Community Leaders in Maryland Join Together to Push for
Quality, Affordable Health Care for All*

Annapolis, MD - July 8, 2008 – Today, here in Annapolis and in 52 other cities across the country, including 37 state capitals, a new national campaign is bringing together millions of Americans to demand quality, affordable health care for all. Health Care for America Now (HCAN) is being launched by nearly 100 national and local groups that represent labor, community organizations, doctors, nurses, women, small businesses, the faith community, people of color, netroots activists, and think tanks. Health Care for America Now is organizing to make sure that the first order of business of the next President and Congress in 2009 is to pass legislation that guarantees quality, affordable health care for all.

Health Care for America Now is an unprecedented coalition led by ACORN, AFSCME, Americans United for Change, Campaign for America's Future, Center for American Progress Action Fund, Center for Community Change, MoveOn, National Education Association, National Women's Law Center, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, SEIU, United Food and Commercial Workers, and USAction.

“In 2009, we will either have a guarantee of quality, affordable health care we all can count on or we will continue to be at the mercy of the private health insurance industry that is charging us more, giving us less and putting company profits before our health,” said Elbridge James, president of Progressive Maryland. “Here in Annapolis and in communities all across the country, we’re asking one question: ‘Which side are you on?’ Are you on the side of quality, affordable health care that is guaranteed and can never be taken away? Or are you on the side that says people should be left alone to fend for themselves against a greedy, unscrupulous insurance industry that too often puts profits before people?”

Also speaking at the Annapolis launch event were:

- Vincent DeMarco, President, Maryland Citizens Health Initiative, the state’s leading health care reform organization
- Arnold Hamilton, Baltimore Director, SEIU Local 32-BJ
- Stuart Katzenberg, Director, Maryland ACORN
- Glenard Middleton, Executive Director, AFSCME Maryland Council 67
- L. Anthony Perez, Government Affairs Coordinator, UFCW Local 400
- Denise Riley, Political Director, Md-DC AFL-CIO

Also participating in the event were Casa of Maryland, Planned Parenthood of Maryland, the Maryland Budget and Tax Policy Institute, the Network of Spiritual Progressives, the Maryland/DC Alliance for Retired Americans, and the Maryland State Teachers Association.

In addition to the organizations in attendance, the Health Care for American Now! launch was supported by average Marylanders whose encounters with our broken health care system have left them sicker and poorer:

- Deloris Vaughn from Towson in Baltimore County (410-823-8372 home or 410-591-2029 cell): Ms. Vaughn, who is a business owner with a Ph.D., applied for individual coverage from a private health insurance company but was rejected because of “preexisting conditions,” one of the most common of the abusive health insurance industry practices that has been outlawed in every country other than the United State of America. Ms. Vaughn’s story was featured in the book “Faces of Maryland’s Uninsured” published by the Maryland Citizens Health Initiative.
- Delores Cheatham, an ACORN member from Baltimore City, whose “preexisting conditions” also cost her her health care coverage. Ms. Cheatham can be reached via Maryland ACORN at 410-735-3360.

Under the Health Care for America Now principles, which are detailed at www.HealthCareForAmericaNow.org, private insurers would be forbidden from taking away or denying insurance or making it unaffordable due to an individual’s health status. The Health Care for America Now campaign will present the principles to members of Congress, who will be asked to indicate whether or not they support them.

Over the next five months, Health Care for America Now plans to spend \$25 million on paid media and have 100 organizers in 45 states. Starting today, the campaign is spending an initial \$1.5 million on national television, print, and online advertising and is sending out an email blast to more than 5 million people. Copies of the print and video ads are on the website, www.HealthCareForAmericaNow.org.

Health Care for America Now offers a bold new vision for health care reform: Americans can keep the private insurance they have, join a new private insurance plan, or choose a public health insurance plan. The campaign also calls for a government role in setting and enforcing rules on the insurance industry which consistently charges unaffordable prices, sets high deductibles, denies coverage based on pre-existing conditions, and drops or limits coverage when people get sick.

Health Care for America Now started with a financial commitment of at least \$500,000 from each of the 13 steering committee members and a \$10 million grant from NY-based Atlantic Philanthropies.

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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