



CONGRESSMAN
JOHN SARBANES
 REPRESENTING MARYLAND'S 3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT



The Sarbanes Standard

Health Care Edition

Dear Friends,

America is home to the world's best doctors and nurses, the most advanced medical technologies, and scientists that are on the cutting edge of research and development. There are many things about our health care system that we should be proud of and fight to retain. But rising health care costs are making quality care less affordable – squeezing American families and businesses. Americans pay more for care than any other citizens in the world, but we are not the healthiest.

It is time for us to create a uniquely American health system that builds on what works and fixes what is broken. We must make health care more efficient and affordable so that all Americans have the opportunity to receive quality care. And we must put doctors and patients back in charge of our health care decisions – not insurance companies.

In a recent speech to the American Medical Association, President Obama offered his own observations about the current state of health care in America. He said, "When it comes to the cost of our health care, then, the status quo is unsustainable. Reform is not a luxury, but a necessity. I know there has been much discussion about what reform would cost, and rightly so. This is a test of whether we – Democrats and Republicans alike – are serious about holding the line on new spending and restoring fiscal discipline. But let there be no doubt – the cost of inaction is greater. If we fail to act, premiums will climb higher, benefits will erode further, and the rolls of uninsured will swell to include millions more Americans."

As the health reform debate continues, the overriding goal for me is, and always will be, providing the opportunity for every American to access quality care. The debate over how we expand coverage has received the most focus and it is very important that we get it right when we develop new insurance options for patients. I will continue to advocate for a system that gives Americans more choices including a "public option." I strongly support a public option health plan because I believe enhanced competition in the health care market will reduce cost and promote innovation.

But there are several other issues receiving much less

national attention that I view as equally important to the success of our reform efforts. I have been particularly focused on ensuring that we have an adequate number of doctors and nurses to support our new health system; bringing a new emphasis to primary and preventive care so that we can catch health problems before patients become very sick and reduce cost; and finding ways to bring health services to the patient through "place-based health care." I have introduced legislation to support each of these goals and have worked to make them a part of the broader health care reform debate. Additional information about each bill can be accessed through my website at <http://www.sarbanes.house.gov/health>.

As a member of both the Health Subcommittee and the full Energy and Commerce Committee, I have participated in scores of hearings on all aspects of our health care system. In late June, making use of what we learned in these hearings, the Congressional panels that claim jurisdiction over various elements of health care policy – Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Education and Labor – released a tri-committee discussion draft for comment and revision. I am pleased that several of my legislative proposals have been incorporated into this document. The discussion draft text and other information can be found on the Energy and Commerce Committee website

<http://energycommerce.house.gov>. The Committee expects to mark up an actual bill in the coming weeks.

Many of you have written to me over the last several months to express your views about health care. I understand and respect that this is a very personal issue for many Americans. In the end, I believe it is possible to make intelligent reforms to our health care system that expand coverage and improve quality of care. I also believe there are many areas where we can reduce cost by eliminating waste and making our system more efficient. The status quo is unsustainable for our economy and I am convinced that long term security will be elusive until we fix our health care system. I look forward to your continued feedback as the process unfolds in the coming weeks and months.

Sincerely,

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