



The Blue Dog Coalition: Principles for Health Care Reform

111th Session of Congress

Fundamental reform of our health care system is needed to control rising health care costs, increase quality and value, and improve access to coverage and care. Health care reform must preserve patient choice of provider, maintain competition within the marketplace, and be approached in a bipartisan manner. The Blue Dog Coalition supports the following principles for comprehensive reform:

Controlling Costs

The rising cost of health care presents significant fiscal challenges to our economy and compromises our ability to balance the federal budget over the long-term. Without reform, federal health care spending is estimated to grow to one-third of the budget and account for over \$1.4 trillion in costs by 2020. Further, rising costs are crippling the ability of families to afford coverage and the ability of businesses to provide it to employees.

- Comprehensive health care reform must be deficit-neutral. Finding savings within the current health care system is a critical first step to achieving this goal.
- Payment incentives should be realigned to improve the quality of patient care and reduce inefficiencies.
- Public reporting of the costs and quality of care should be examined to increase transparency.
- Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP program integrity should be strengthened by reducing waste, fraud and abuse.

Increasing Value

Up to one-third of the \$2.3 trillion spent on health care each year is unnecessary or duplicative. Many patients receive recommended care only half of the time. The prevalence of chronic conditions, the number of medical errors, and high rate of infant mortality indicate that we are not getting an adequate return on our health care investment.

- The role of primary care providers should be strengthened and prioritized. Patient care should be coordinated across settings and focus on the entire course of a patient's illness.
- Financial incentives should be implemented to encourage beneficiaries to follow recommended prevention and wellness services.
- Additional investment should be made to research cures and improve treatments for health conditions.

Improving Access

The primary source of health care coverage for 158 million Americans is through the employer-based system. However, over 45 million Americans are uninsured and approximately 80% are from working families. Many individuals and families cannot access basic primary care services in their communities or receive timely, affordable care.

- Individual and small businesses should be provided with a targeted tax credit to use toward the cost of health care coverage.
- Payments to rural health care providers and community health centers should be modernized in order to meet the unique challenges that these entities face.
- Loan assistance and forgiveness programs should be improved to increase the number of physicians, nurses and other health care professionals in rural and underserved areas.
- Access to telemedicine programs should be promoted and expanded.
- The ability of insurance companies to deny coverage to individuals with pre-existing conditions should be eliminated.
- Access to long-term care services should be improved. Patients should be provided with the option of home- or community-based care, along with increased efforts to educate the public about end of life care and long-term care insurance.