

February 23, 2010

Sent Via FAX

Representative Earl Blumenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
2267 Rayburn H.O.B
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Peter DeFazio
U.S. House of Representatives
2134 Rayburn H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senate
107 Russell S.O.B
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Kurt Schrader
U.S. House of Representatives
1419 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Greg Walden
U.S. House of Representatives
1210 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Representative David Wu
U.S. House of Representatives
1023 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Ron Wyden
U.S. Senate
223 Dirksen S.O.B.
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Crossing the Finish Line on Health Reform

Dear Member of the Oregon Congressional Delegation:

The unveiling of President Obama's health reform plan signals that, for Congress, the moment of truth has arrived: will Congress rendezvous with history by delivering *comprehensive* health reform to the American people, at long last? We respectfully urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that Congress crosses the finish line on health reform.

The U.S. House and Senate have agreed to bills that, like the President's proposal, would help protect the middle class and small businesses from the inexorable rise in health care costs. Here in Oregon, employee contributions for premiums and deductibles have increased an average of 9 percent each year since 2004, and last year insurance rates for small businesses jumped 12 percent. The House and Senate legislation promise to curb these increases.

The proposals before you would also extend coverage to at least 30 million Americans without insurance. A primary reason for lack of coverage is that small business owners and families can't afford it.

Without meaningful reform, our nation will continue down a destructive path in which the rising cost of care imperils the health and personal finances of an increasing number of Americans.

But just as reform seems within reach, some members of Congress are hesitant. Some say that reform should be passed piecemeal or postponed altogether. Either of those options would be a mistake.

Never has our nation been so close to achieving comprehensive health reform, and another chance may not come for a long while. Hundreds of thousands of working families in Oregon struggling with crushing health costs or no coverage at all do not have the luxury of waiting.

Piecemeal changes to the system will not work. Insurance reform is a good example. While popular with the public and necessary, insurance market reform alone would cause premiums to skyrocket. Only when accompanied by expanded coverage and other reforms would changes in the insurance business restrain health care costs.

As Congress decides whether to approve meaningful health reform, we hope that you will heed the will of the American people. Most Americans continue to support *comprehensive* reform. We are confident that the public and history will reward those with the courage to cross the finish line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Bauer" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Janet Bauer
Policy Analyst