



Better Health Care Together

A Common Sense Approach to Health Care

policy

November 18, 2008

The Honorable Barack Obama
President-Elect
Obama-Biden Transition Project

Dear President-Elect Obama:

Congratulations on winning an historic election to be the 44th President of the United States. We know that a key priority for your Administration will be the vital work to strengthen our economy. Fixing our nations' health care system must be part of this complex work.

As leaders of Better Health Care Together, a coalition of corporate CEOs and the heads of labor and public policy organizations, we know that addressing the needs of our nation's health care system *is essential to the country's long-term economic strength and prosperity*. The facts are clear:

- Health costs rose 6.1% in 2007, a rate far higher than overall inflation (2.1)¹, at this rate, health care will consume 37 percent of our GDP.²
- For individuals, medical costs contribute to approximately half of all personal bankruptcies and are the most dominant reason cited for mortgage foreclosure^{3,4};
- For business, the rising health costs impede investments that could result in job growth, improved infrastructure and accelerated deployment of 21st century technologies and undoubtedly make US jobs susceptible to outsourcing.

You have already shown much needed leadership by making health care a priority policy in your campaign. We ask that you take the next step, and **immediately** convene a national health summit of all stakeholders to address the health system crisis within the context of larger economic reform. The goal of early action is to ensure that a new, stronger American health care system is in place by 2012. We, the leaders of Better Health Care Together, believe:

- Every person in America must have quality, affordable health insurance coverage.
- Individuals have a responsibility to maintain and protect their health.
- America must dramatically improve the value it receives for every health care dollar; and
- Businesses, governments, and individuals all should contribute to managing and financing a new American health care system.

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation/Health Research and Educational Trust, 2007 Annual Employer Health Benefits Survey.

² Congressional Budget Office. (November 2007). The Long-Term Outlook for Health Care Spending. Washington, DC

³ Himmelstein, Warren, Thorne and Woohandler, "MarketWatch: Illness and Injury as Contributors to Bankruptcy", *Health Affairs*, Feb 2005.

⁴ Robertson, Egelhof, and Hoke, "Get Sick, Get Out: The Medical Causes of Home Mortgage Foreclosures", *Health Matrix*, August 18, 2008, pages 65 – 105, Volume 18:65 2008.



In turn, we give you our commitment to providing the leadership necessary for our nation's elected officials to enact truly comprehensive reform.

Sincerely,

Lee Scott, Chief Executive Officer
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Andy Stern, President
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

James W. Cicconi, Senior Executive Vice President
External and Legislative Affairs, AT&T

Larry Cohen, President
Communications Workers of America (CWA)

Craig R. Barrett, Chairman
Intel Corporation

Carl Camden, Chief Executive Officer
Kelly Services

Tom Gerke, Chief Executive Officer
Embarq

Sarah R. Wartell, Acting Chief Executive Officer
Center for American Progress (CAP)

Charlie E. Kolb, President
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Rosalie Rosario, National President
League of United Latin American Citizens
(LULAC)