

DENNIS J. KUCINICH
10TH DISTRICT, OHIO

2445 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-5871

14400 DETROIT AVENUE
LAKEWOOD, OHIO 44107
(216) 228-8850

PARMATOWN MALL
7904 DAY DRIVE
PARMA, OH 44129
(440) 845-2707



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

www.kucinich.house.gov

CHAIRMAN,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC POLICY

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

August 11, 2009

Dear Colleague:

During consideration of H.R. 3200, America's Affordable Health Choices Act, in the Committee on Education and Labor, I introduced an amendment that would provide a waiver of the application of ERISA for a state that signs a single payer health care plan into law. The amendment passed by a vote of 27-19.

Systems that remove the insurance companies from care are well tested and consistently outperform systems that rely on private insurance. Their costs are lower, their access is universal, the coverage is comprehensive, and their systems are far more equitable. Such a single-payer health care system would also provide major economic stimulus. Half of all bankruptcies in the US are the result of the failure of an insurance plan to do the very thing that drives us to buy health insurance – protect us from catastrophic financial burdens that arise from health care needs. Only single payer health care can rid us of the economic drag of medial bankruptcies by providing truly comprehensive coverage – for less money than we are currently paying.

It is no wonder then that states are demanding single payer. Not only does it help people stay out of poverty, but it would provide major relief for states facing budget difficulties. The Lewin Group's financial analysis of the California single payer bill that recently passed the legislature twice found that "the net cost of the program to state and local governments is a savings of about \$900 million" in 2006 alone. There are also strong single payer movements in Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, Colorado, and New Mexico.

However, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) has been used to thwart efforts at the state and regional level to improve health care. Though the law was intended to protect the integrity and quality of employee benefit plans including health care, ERISA has been used in courts to try to stop health care reform efforts in Maryland, San Francisco, and Suffolk County, New York.

The Kucinich amendment yields to the wishes of those in a state who demand a health care system that is proven to work well. It is entirely voluntary. If a state wants better health care than can be provided by the federal government, the federal government should not stand in their way. I urge you to support the Kucinich amendment.

Sincerely,

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress