

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4903

December 22, 2008

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Committee on Finance
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus:

As you and your committee begin the task of fashioning a stimulus package that will bring our economy out of this historic recession, I wanted to bring to your attention to some health care programs that should be included. These suggestions would have both immediate and long-lasting impacts on the economy.

The U.S. health care system has reached a pivotal point. As we prepare to expand insurance coverage to those who lack it there is an urgent need to rapidly prepare the health care workforce to better serve our aging population. I believe that we can stimulate the economy and help the workforce adapt by strengthening existing short-term training programs in geriatrics, chronic care management and long-term care, which will help to attract and retain health care practitioners in these fields where there is already a severe shortage. We can accomplish these goals by enacting policy embodied in the *Retooling the Health Care Workforce for an Aging America Act* (S.3730), that would: increase funding for grants in geriatrics at health professions schools; support additional training in geriatrics for nurses; establish tuition stipends to allow direct care workers in long-term care to acquire nursing degrees; establish a national demonstration to evaluate a set of training requirements for personal and home care aides; and provide information on training and employment opportunities in geriatrics and long-term care to veterans through existing services.

Next, I would like to make a request about a program very important to my home state of Wisconsin—SeniorCare. SeniorCare is a successful state prescription assistance program that currently has over 86,000 Wisconsin seniors on its rolls. Unfortunately, the program is set to expire on December 31, 2009, and with the deadline quickly approaching, I am pursuing every effort to continue this important program. One of these efforts is to ask that you include an extension of SeniorCare in the stimulus package.

SeniorCare is an extremely successful program. Although small relative to the entire country, it has a huge impact on the state of Wisconsin. It saves seniors money and saves the federal government money. It is estimated that continuing SeniorCare will save the federal government roughly \$26 million for each year it is in effect. Extending this program is the right thing to do for the state of Wisconsin, Wisconsin seniors, and American taxpayers. I urge you to adopt an extension of this essential program.

I know you face a difficult task, but the proposals I have called your attention to can do a lot to overcome the challenges we will face in the next year. I hope you will include them in any stimulus plan you consider. Please contact Joy McGlaun (202-224-6018) or Anne Montgomery (202-224-5364) on my staff if there is any additional information or assistance my office can provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Herb Kohl". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Herb Kohl
U.S. Senator