

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7012

March 18, 2010

The Honorable Bernard Sanders  
United States Senate  
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
United States Senate  
107 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Bernie and Jeff:

Thank you for your hard work and dedication to fixing our broken health care system. Your efforts to lower costs, improve quality, and increase coverage have been critical to the progress we have made this Congress. I believe that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will bring down costs for the millions of Americans who have insurance in addition to covering millions of Americans who do not. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act also contains strong provisions that ensure premium dollars are spent on patient care and that protect consumers against unreasonable rate increases.

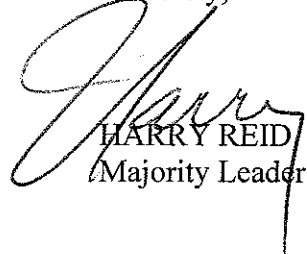
The legislation we will be asked to consider in the coming week, the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act, will build upon that foundation by providing additional assistance for low- and middle-income Americans, increasing funding for Community Health Centers and primary care providers in Medicaid, and ensuring that one million more uninsured Americans will have health care coverage.

These two pieces of legislation will also reform Medicare by increasing its solvency and improving the way care is delivered. In addition, this legislation will close the prescription drug donut hole, a goal congressional Democrats have shared since its creation in 2003.

As you know, I am a strong supporter of a public option, and I included the HELP Committee's public option in the bill I brought to the Senate floor last year. I was very disappointed when it became clear that we did not have the votes to keep it.

Nevertheless, like you, I remain committed to pursuing the public option. While I believe that the legislation we are considering does much to provide affordable coverage to millions of Americans and curb insurance company abuses, I also believe that the public option would provide additional competition to make insurance even more affordable. As we have discussed, I will work to ensure that we are able to vote on the public option in the coming months.

Sincerely,



HARRY REID  
Majority Leader