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Contact: Michael Freeman
202-452-8700
mfreeman@hlc.org

America's Major Healthcare Companies and Organizations, Crossing all Health Sectors, Call Upon Congress to Avoid Ideological Extremes, Pass Centrist, Bipartisan Health Reform Bill

Industry Leaders Affirm Commitment to "Robust" Health Reform Legislation; Say Effort Shouldn't Be Impeded by Politically Divisive Issues

WASHINGTON – More than 40 of the nation's most prominent healthcare companies and organizations told congressional leaders today that health reform will not be successful if it is "politically polarizing" and wears "the label of either ideological extreme." Industry leaders praised the ongoing work of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Blue Dog Coalition to "develop a bipartisan, centrist bill that achieves essential health system improvements and reflects the values and concerns of patients and taxpayers."

In a letter authorized by Healthcare Leadership Council members -- executives from leading hospitals, health plans, medical device manufacturers, pharmaceutical companies, academic health centers, health distributors and other for-profit and non-profit sectors -- industry leaders said their "shared commitment to improve the affordability, accessibility and quality of our healthcare system has never been stronger."

But, the letter said, a politically polarizing bill will divide the American people and will not provide stable, long-term reform.

The industry leaders wrote, "We believe that sustainable health reform – reform that can win the support of the American people and be sustainable for years to come – cannot wear the label of either ideological extreme, but must come from the political center. A reform bill that is politically polarizing is one that will have difficulty winning broad public acceptance and will be subject to constant upheaval. Thus, we strongly support ongoing efforts in Congress such as those by members of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Blue Dog Coalition to develop a bipartisan centrist bill that achieves essential health system improvements and reflects the values and concerns of patients and taxpayers."

In the letter, the companies and organization said Congress should focus on aspects of health reform that enjoy strong bipartisan support, including insurance market reforms to eliminate pre-existing condition barriers, an individual responsibility to have

insurance, healthcare payment reforms, investments in wellness and prevention and expanded use of health information technology. These reforms, they said, constitute a strong health reform bill and should not be sidetracked by controversial proposals, such as the government health plan option, that do not enjoy broad support.

The letter states, “Progress toward genuine, necessary reforms should not be impeded by politically-divisive issues such as the proposed creation of a new government-run health insurance program. The adoption of insurance market reforms accomplishes the goal of accessible, affordable coverage without threatening the financial viability of physicians and hospitals and undermining the employer-based system that serves over 160 million Americans.”

HLC members include Abbott, Aetna, Amerinet, AmerisourceBergen, Aptuit, Ascension Health, Assurant Health, AstraZeneca, Baxter International, Baylor Health Care System, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, Cardinal Health, Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Covidien, CVS Caremark, Eli Lilly and Company, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, Inc., GlaxoSmithKline, Health Care Service Corporation, Healthways, Ikaria, Johnson & Johnson, Lahey Clinic, Marshfield Clinic, Mayo Clinic, MedAssets, Inc., Medtronic, MemorialCare Medical Centers, Merck & Company, Inc., New York-Presbyterian Hospital, NorthShore University HealthSystem, Novartis Pharmaceuticals, Novo Nordisk, Inc., Pfizer, Inc., Premier, Inc. sanofi-aventis, Texas Health Resources, Theragenics, Vanderbilt University School of Nursing, VHA, Inc. and WellPoint, Inc.
