

MARIA CANTWELL
WASHINGTON

717 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705
(202) 224-3441
FAX: (202) 228-0514

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES
INDIAN AFFAIRS
SMALL BUSINESS

February 22, 2006

Citizen's Health Care Working Group
Seattle Center
305 Harrison Street
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Friends,

Thank you for taking part in today's important discussion. To make valuable and lasting reforms in our nation's health care system, your input is essential. The way in which we respond as a community to one another's health needs says a lot about our priorities. For too long, public discussion has focused on finding quick ways to cut costs across the board. We need to do more than just reduce the final price tag. We must reinvent the system and recognize that cost is forever tied to something else: quality. To succeed, we must engage both elements—cost and quality—at once with skill and sensitivity.

That's because higher quality care is less expensive. Better outcomes are cheaper than adverse outcomes. This may seem strange—most of us associate high quality with high costs. But the reality of the American health care system does not support this assumption. We spend more than any other country on health care. Yet, millions are still uninsured or underinsured. Much of the excess spending can be attributed to archaic systems, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and dangerous mistakes, causing costs to soar and patient care to suffer.

Real change won't be easy, but it doesn't have to wait. I continue to fight in the U.S. Senate for powerful initiatives which begin to address the problems you are discussing today. We must ensure a top-quality health professional workforce, especially in areas where there are significant personnel shortages. We ought to foster widespread implementation of health information technology and support small businesses with real proposals to make offering health insurance more affordable. With each new step, we strive to improve access and reduce the cost of health care for all Americans.

The people of Washington state have a proud history and a bright future. Together, we will be challenged by sudden and tremendous changes in health care—economic, technological, and demographic changes. You are on the front lines, witnessing this

PLEASE REPLY TO:

2930 WETMORE AVENUE
SUITE 9B
EVERETT, WA 98201
(425) 303-0114
FAX: (425) 303-8351

825 JADWIN AVENUE
SUITE 204/204A
RICHLAND, WA 99352
(509) 946-8106
FAX: (509) 946-9377

JACKSON FEDERAL BUILDING
915 2ND AVENUE, SUITE 3206
SEATTLE, WA 98174-1003
(206) 220-6400
TOLL FREE: 1-888-648-7328
FAX: (206) 220-6404

U.S. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE
WEST 920 RIVERSIDE, SUITE 697
SPOKANE, WA 99201
(509) 353-2507
FAX: (509) 353-2547

950 PACIFIC AVENUE
SUITE 615
TACOMA, WA 98402
(253) 572-2281
FAX: (253) 572-5879

MARSHALL HOUSE
1313 OFFICERS' ROW
FIRST FLOOR
VANCOUVER, WA 98661
(360) 696-7838
FAX: (360) 696-7844

evolution and feeling its consequences everyday. And, that is why your participation today is so valuable. That is why, together, we can make this Working Group a success and transform our health care system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maria Cantwell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "M" and "C".

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator