

**AMERICAN MEDICAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION:  
COMMENTS TO THE  
CITIZENS HEALTH CARE WORKING GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

The American Medical Student Association commends the Citizens Health Care Working Group for taking on the important task of assessing Americans' expectation and concerns regarding health care. We hope that Congress and the Executive branch of government will use these recommendations as a guideline for addressing the current health care crisis in our country. AMSA would also like to note that the recommendations may carry more political weight if they included financing projections as well expected long-term outcomes. We thank you for taking the time to consider our comments.

**Recommendation: Guarantee financial protection against very high health care costs. No one in America should be impoverished by health care costs.**

**Establish a national program (private or public) that ensures**

**Coverage for all Americans,**

**Protection against very high out-of-pocket medical costs for everyone, and**

**Financial protection for low income individuals and families.**

This recommendation is implying that every American should have access to a high deductible, Catastrophic Coverage plan. AMSA strongly support the idea that no American should be impoverished by high health care costs. However, we are concerned about:

- The possibility of requiring all Americans to have coverage for high-cost services. An individual mandate may not be affordable to a large amount of uninsured individuals, even with a government subsidy.
- The recommendation makes no note of regulating insurance companies, which is a necessity if an individual mandate is going to be instituted. Also, this does not address cost-control issues such as reducing administrative costs.
- AMSA would also like to remind the CHCWG of the importance of preventive care and note that a high deductible catastrophic coverage plan would not be sufficient to ensure the health of our country.

**Recommendation: Support integrated community health networks**

- We support the development of community health centers and the idea of targeting community health networks towards underserved areas.
- We believe that it is important to include preventive health measures and means of handling patients with chronic illnesses in this recommendation
- We agree that expanding and modifying the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) concept will benefit some of our most vulnerable populations; however we do not support disseminating funds to new health centers if those health centers are not willing to abide by the current guidelines of FQHC's; for example including community members as part of the Board of Directors of their Health Centers.

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- We agree that federal support is necessary to develop integrated community health networks and ensure efficiency of the process. We support collaboration with state and local governing bodies as well as with appropriate organizations.
- AMSA would like to recommend incentives to encourage physicians-in-training to choose primary care residencies, for example loan forgiveness programs.
- AMSA demands healthcare justice and urges the CHCWG to recommend measures to enforce equal access and quality of care to all individuals.

**Recommendation: Promote efforts to improve quality of care and efficiency**

- Improving quality of care and efficiency must be a top priority of health care reform; however, we do not want to limit federal involvement only to federally subsidized programs. Private programs should also be evaluated for quality of care.
- AMSA would like this recommendation to include improvement of healthcare technology with respect to Emergency Medical Services. We believe that focusing attention on technological advances is the next step in increasing efficiency and quality of health care.

**Recommendation: Fundamentally restructure the way that palliative care, hospice care and other end-of-life services are financed and provided, so that people living with advanced incurable conditions have increased access to these services in the environment they choose.**

- We support means that would allow for quality, affordable long-term and end of life care to individuals in need.
- We are disappointed that the recommendation does not recommend increasing federal funding for Medicare to deal with the aging baby boomers generation

**Recommendation: It should be public policy that all Americans have affordable health care**

- It is the philosophy of the American Medical Student Association that access to quality affordable healthcare is a human right. We applaud the CHCWG for this recommendation.
- We are in strong support of a universal health care system and believe that a single payer system is the best means of financing this goal.

**Recommendation: Define a 'core' benefit package for all Americans**

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- The creation of an independent non-partisan private-public group to recommend core benefits that every American should have will help to create a national standard of adequate health care; however, AMSA calls for this recommendation to go a step further and provide means of evaluating and enforcing the coverage package.

**Additional Comments:**

As future physicians and patient advocates, the 68,000 medical, pre-medical and international members of the American Medical Student Association would like to express our serious concern for our failing health care system. We strongly believe that health care is a right and no one should be denied access to quality, affordable and comprehensive care on the basis of income, race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.

We urge the Citizens Health Care Working Group to represent the comments they are receiving justly and to remember, aside from your personal beliefs, each of you were charged with representing the views of the citizens of the United States.

Thank you for all of your time spent traveling across the country and listening to the health care concerns of Americans. We applaud your commitment to fixing our ailing healthcare system.