

Philadelphia Area Committee to Defend Health Care
c/o PSR
704 N. 23rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130



August 25, 2006

Patricia A. Maryland, Ph.D.
Chair, Citizens' Health Care Working Group
7201 Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 575
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

Dear Dr. Maryland and other members of the Citizens Health Care Working Group,

We are writing to express our opposition to the Interim Recommendations of the Citizens Health Care Working Group. Specifically, we are disappointed that the recommendations do not reflect the strong support for a single payer universal health care program voiced at the meeting we attended and at many other meetings in cities across the United States.

We represent the leadership of the Philadelphia Area Committee to Defend Health Care (PACDHC), a local advocacy group that supports a publicly-financed, privately-delivered health care system for all Americans ("Medicare for all"). We have over 500 members and led the successful fight for a ballot question on universal health care in the 2003 Philadelphia city elections. This ballot question passed by a ratio of 3:1. Many of our members participated in the April 10th session of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group in Philadelphia.

On the question that asked respondents which option they would choose to ensure access to high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans, 16 of the 19 cities polled answered "establish a national health program" as their first choice, with the other three cities all ranking "establish a national health program" among their top 5 choices out of 10. Yet, the Interim Recommendations state that "we heard a wide range of views about how we as a nation could accomplish the goal of health care for all", and nowhere in the "Values and Principles" summary of the recommendations is the concept of a national health program mentioned. When 16 out of 19 cities say that a national health program is their first choice, this hardly represents "a wide range of views", but rather, a strong consensus. This support for a single payer universal health care program also is suggested by the answer to the question about spending priorities, where again 15 out of 19 sites listed "guarantee health insurance for all", whereas incremental steps such as improving the financing of safety net programs and improving access for minorities received much lower rankings.

We hope that the members of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group will take under advisement our suggestion that the Interim Recommendations should reflect the strong support voiced for a national health care system. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sylvia Metzler, CRNP
Tim Lachman, MD
Walter Tsou, MD, MPH

Co-chairs, Philadelphia Area Committee to Defend Health Care