

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0702

November 19, 1993

Mr. Thomas D. Bowler
101 Slocum Road
Hebron, Connecticut 06248

Dear Mr. Bowler:

Thank you for sharing your views on health care reform. I consider the opportunity to reform the health care system an historic moment not unlike the civil rights movement of the 1960s or the guarantee of a free public education at the turn of the century. As in those times, we have an opportunity to rise above party politics and special interests to tackle a seemingly overwhelming problem facing the nation.

I expect the debate over President Clinton's plan to continue for many months and for the process of developing a final plan to be evolutionary. Thoughtful discussion and compromise are necessary if we are to succeed. However, there are four broad goals that I believe we must achieve.

First, we must provide emotional and economic security to all Americans who today risk losing health coverage. Each month, 23,000 Connecticut residents lose their insurance. Even though many regain coverage within a year, one major illness during this period can result in financial disaster, denial of care, and inability to get future coverage due to a "pre-existing condition." In these troubled economic times, many citizens of our state are afraid of losing their job and the benefits that go with employment. Under the current system, job loss means loss of health insurance. That is a situation that cannot continue.

A second goal must be to control costs that consume an increasingly large share of national spending and family income. In 1991, a typical Connecticut family spent \$5,420 on health care. Without reform, it will pay \$12,000 by the year 2000.

A third requirement must be to provide access to comprehensive health care to the uninsured--an estimated 37 million Americans including 250,000 Connecticut residents. Citizens without insurance will often forgo quality preventive care. When they can no longer ignore their health condition, they often turn to expensive emergency room care or land in the hospital. But someone has to foot the bill for these services. That means 37 million people receive medical care every year and send the bill to the taxpayers.

While some of these people regain coverage within a year, they must worry about their families' health and the threat of financial disaster while they remain uninsured. There is no guarantee that they will receive needed care if a family member gets sick. And it is likely that if family members get sick while they are uninsured, their premiums will rise significantly and their new policy will refuse to cover the "pre-existing condition." At a time of continuing recession in Connecticut, such a situation is intolerable.

Finally, as we work to provide guaranteed coverage to everyone and control costs, we must maintain and attempt to improve the quality of care. In our criticism of what is wrong with the American health care system, we must not lose sight of what is right, nor dampen technological innovation and advances that distinguish our system and result in cost savings. We are all familiar with the news stories of the world's most wealthy and powerful people coming to America for medical treatment because they know that the United States offers the best medical care in the world.

As the discussions continue, I am playing an active role in the health care debate as a member of the Labor and Human Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over major portions of the proposal. Throughout the fall, the Committee is holding, on average, two hearings a week. During these hearings, I will continue to make sure the process of reforming the health care system is inclusive. We must avoid finger-pointing and must listen to the voices of all the players in the health care system, including the pharmaceutical and insurance industries in our state, many of whom are also committed to health care reform.

As the debate continues, I will also pay particular attention to the importance of preventive medicine and the special needs of pregnant women and children. I have always believed that caring for the infants and children of our country is an investment in the future that pays off many times over. As the chairman of the Labor Committee's Subcommittee on Children, I am continuing to focus on issues such as Head Start, family leave, child care, and violence in schools that help us invest in our children.

As the Senate begins to address the specifics of the plan, I welcome your suggestions and concerns. Be assured that I will be an active player in the debate and will work to enact meaningful health care reform for all Americans. Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said it best when he acknowledged that we will not all agree on every aspect of the plan, but we must stand by the major principles of health care reform.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
United States Senator