

July 29, 2009

Dear Paul,

Thank you for contacting me regarding your support for a public health insurance plan option. I agree with you.

It is far past time for Congress to guarantee health insurance coverage for all Americans. Too many Americans are forced to make basic decisions regarding their health based on cost rather than on medical reasons; too many delay seeking treatment and do not receive preventive care, which results in more costly, or even fatal, consequences down the line. Our country spends \$5,670 per capita annually on health care - which is twice as much as any other industrialized nation - and 15.6 percent of our gross domestic product. Despite this spending, we are not healthier than those other countries, and we still have more than 46 million Americans - including eight million children - who do not have health insurance, and countless others who are underinsured.

As you know, these high and rising costs take a tremendous toll on American families and businesses. While inflation grew 9.7 percent, and wage growth was 12.3 percent, premiums for family insurance coverage rose 59 percent from 2000-2004 and show no sign of stabilizing. As a result, many employers are shifting much of their health care costs to employees, no longer providing health benefits, or eliminating positions.

On May 6, 2009, I joined a number of my Senate colleagues in sending a letter to the Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and the Senate Finance Committee supporting a public plan option as a core part of health care reform. I have included the letter for your review.

Ensuring every American is guaranteed good, affordable health care coverage is made much more difficult by relying only on private insurers. While Americans should be able to retain their current coverage if they choose, providing a public option should keep health care costs down for all Americans. On June 18, 2009, I gave a speech on the Senate floor regarding the need for a public plan option. I have included a copy of the speech for your review.

Again, thank you for contacting me. As health care reform moves forward, I will continue working to improve access to health care and make health care more affordable for the people of Wisconsin. You can learn more about my work on health care reform at my website at <http://feingold.senate.gov/healthreform.html>. I look forward to hearing from you in the future.