

**Washington, D.C.** - Today, House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD), Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Congressman Elijah Cummings (D-MD), and Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (D-MD) joined the Maryland Black Mayors, the National Conference of Black Mayors, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, AARP Maryland, and the National Black Leadership Forum to discuss the urgent need for health insurance reform.

The group highlighted a recent study done by Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland, which found that the cost of not addressing inequalities in the health care system cost the United States economy \$1.24 trillion between 2003 and 2006.

“For far too long, our calls for health insurance reform have been suppressed by an indifference to action or by those on the side of the status quo,” said **Hoyer**. “The time for change has come. The time for affordable, quality health care for all Americans is now.”

“Keeping the status quo in our health insurance system is not acceptable - this report by Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland makes that abundantly clear,” said **Van Hollen**. “According to a new Harvard study, an estimated 45,000 people in the United States die every year - one every 12 minutes - because they lack health insurance coverage. The time for reform is now, and we are committed to improving access, cutting cost, and reducing health care disparities as part of that effort.”

“When Congress finally tears down the wall keeping our nation from healthcare reform, and we pass reform, it must include legislation to end these disparities that are crushing those Americans who are underserved. We must encourage evidence-based treatment, using community-based solutions to find out what is really hurting the people in our communities and how to fix it. We will take in every piece of information we can measure, and that information will allow us to target treatment and care. We will no longer act as though the diseases and illnesses that trouble the suburban school children in Columbia exist in the same numbers, with the same effect as those faced by urban children in Baltimore. The health care reforms that will be signed into law by President Obama, will encourage preventive care to slow the spread of sickness and disease and will give all Americans the opportunity for quality, affordable health insurance, allowing them to keep their families, and themselves, healthy, safe and productive,” said **Cummings**.

“The time for health insurance reform is now,” said **Edwards**. “With the cost of health care skyrocketing, the financial burden on families and business is devastating. According to the Urban Institute's ‘best case’ scenario, individual and family spending on health

care will increase 52.6% over ten years if no action is taken. Over the same time period, Maryland's uninsured population could rise to 962,000 Marylanders, or 17.3% of Maryland's population. This is simply unacceptable. That is why a robust public option that lowers costs, ensures competition, and provides accountability is critical to reform. I thank the Maryland Black Mayors for taking action and joining my colleagues and I in demanding that meaningful health insurance reform is passed.&quot;

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