



Business and
Professional
Women's
Foundation

For Immediate Release

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Health Care Reform Will Improve Outcomes for Women, Families and Small Businesses

Statement of Deborah L. Frett, CEO Business and Professional Women's Foundation

March 22, 2010, Washington, DC --"The passage of health care reform will improve outcomes for women, families and small businesses. This initial solution may not be perfect but it is a critical first step to achieve systemic change in U.S. health care - the status quo was literally killing us. BPW Foundation has heard from both our employee and employer supporters that health care reform is necessary to achieve *successful workplaces* where women and families can succeed and businesses can profit.

We must continue to improve health care. Reform should include affordability, equality of access and care, stability and security, shared responsibility, and support for prevention. BPW Foundation supports health care reform that recognizes the diverse needs of women, families and small businesses as they work together to create successful workplaces.

Health care reform is a woman's issue. Women are 50 percent of the population, 49 percent of the U.S. workforce and we are "paying" more for health care. The high cost of health care has a disproportionate impact on women because our incomes are less (22 percent less on average due to the persistent gender wage gap) and a greater share of our income is consumed by health care. On average, women of childbearing age pay 68 percent more out-of-pocket for their health care than men. Women are also more likely to delay or avoid getting the care they need because they cannot afford it. The extension of Medicaid eligibility, elimination of gender rating, offering of insurance subsidies and the prohibition on denial of coverage due to medical history and pre-existing conditions will improve outcomes for women.

Health care reform is a family issue. The uncertainty in the insurance market impacts children and spouses who count on an employee's health insurance coverage that can be lost because of job loss, job change, a move or illness putting everyone in the family at risk. Ensuring that coverage can not be lost due to illness or denied for pre-existing conditions improve the outcomes of the entire family. The sheer cost of insurance coverage can be devastating to families. Additionally, expanding access to health care will decrease the number of uninsured especially working families with children.

Health care reform is a small business issue. The cost of providing health care is crippling businesses of all sizes, especially small businesses. Women-owned firms represent 30 percent of all U.S. businesses and are the fastest growing percentage of small business owners. Sixty percent of America's uninsured are small business owners, workers and their families. Small business owners want to provide health care coverage to their employees because it helps with employee recruitment and retention, increases productivity and is the "right thing to do."

The driving force behind the erosion of health coverage for small businesses has been cost. The creation of new marketplaces to buy insurance on the state and regional level and tax credits to enable and encourage small businesses to provide employee health care coverage will improve the bottom line for everyone.

I applaud our elected leaders for using this historic opportunity to improve the health care system. By expanding access, sharing responsibility through coverage mandates and ensuring that coverage is intact when needed most, they have put the country on the right track to do what is best for the people. In order to develop a strong workforce and economy, systemic reform should guarantee access to quality and affordable care for women, families and small businesses."

Business and Professional Women's Foundation (BPW Foundation) partners with women, employers and policymakers to create successful workplaces that practice and embrace diversity, equity and work-life balance. Through our groundbreaking research and our unique role as a neutral convener of employers and employees, BPW Foundation leads the way in developing and advocating for policies and programs that "work" for both women and businesses. BPW Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization. www.bpwfoundation.org

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