

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



815 Sixteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 637-5000
www.aflcio.org

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Contact: Amaya Tune: 202-637-5018

STATEMENT BY AFL-CIO PRESIDENT JOHN SWEENEY ON SENATE HELP COMMITTEE PUBLIC PLAN OPTION

July 2, 2009

We applaud the Senate Health Education Labor & Pensions (HELP) committee's proposal for a strong and effective quality public plan option that will give consumers more choices and increased competition that will hold private insurers accountable and, control cost growth. A quality public plan will give consumers an alternative to confusing private plans that profit from denying care and shortchanging coverage.

In addition, the full participation provisions for employers creates a shared responsibility structure that encourages employers to retain their health benefits and prevents them from taking advantage of subsidized coverage by dumping workers. This will go a long way to help cover the millions of people who work hard every day yet still lack health care.

We commend Senators Kennedy and Dodd on listening to the will of the people who have overwhelmingly called for a public plan option. The HELP committee's proposal is on target with addressing the key concerns of working families: holding down costs and making their coverage more secure, not raising costs for those who have good coverage.

Families everywhere can be encouraged that their leaders are working to fulfill the promise of quality affordable health care for all. We call on the Senate to act swiftly in a bi-partisan manner and pass this much needed reform.

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