

July 16, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Leader of the Minority  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boehner  
House Republican Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Congressman Boehner:

We are writing to express our strong support for a provision in the President's fiscal year 2010 budget and the Senate Finance Committee's coverage options paper that would help us provide family planning services, including breast and cervical cancer screening, contraceptive care, and related basic preventive health care, to millions of women and families in need. This small but important change in federal law, known as the Medicaid Family Planning State Option, would give us the needed flexibility to quickly and efficiently expand coverage for this basic preventive health care under Medicaid. We urge you to take immediate action to pass this important legislation as part of health care reform.

Many of our states have already created family planning expansion programs, though we have done so with great difficulty. Since the early 1990s, 27 states have been granted federal waivers to expand their Medicaid family planning coverage. These demonstration projects have been unqualified successes, providing care to millions of women while saving states millions of dollars. From Arkansas to Oregon, states have seen savings of \$10 million or more per year as a result of these family planning waivers. In light of the current budget crisis, these savings could bring important relief to our states' health care programs. Unfortunately, the federal waiver process puts unnecessary roadblocks in the way of our efforts to maintain and expand coverage for family planning services. Particularly given the well-established value of these demonstrations, the current approval and re-approval required under federal law limits our efforts to meet basic health needs in our states, wastes critical staff resources, and hamstring our ability to adapt to changing needs.

The Medicaid Family Planning State Option would allow states to expand Medicaid coverage for family planning services, without a waiver, to individuals who do not otherwise qualify for full Medicaid benefits. While health care reform will begin to move our nation toward comprehensive coverage for all, expanding access to family planning services will help us to meet the immediate needs of our state residents in the interim.

Expanding coverage for family planning services is particularly important during these difficult economic times. One in five women report not filling a prescription because of cost, and families often choose to forego a number of regular health expenses to help make ends meet. As women are the

primary health care decision makers in most families, their own health care is often the first to be dropped. Yet foregoing basic family planning care could have serious consequences for women and their families, including increases in unintended pregnancy, postponed screenings for breast and cervical cancer, increases in untreated sexually transmitted infections that cause infertility, and delays in access to prenatal care.

We urge you to take swift action to pass this common-sense legislation. We look forward to working with you to help us meet the need for family planning services as we move toward a reformed health care system nationwide.


Thank you,



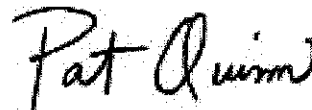
Governor Ted Strickland  
Ohio



Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.  
Colorado



Governor Jack Markell  
Delaware



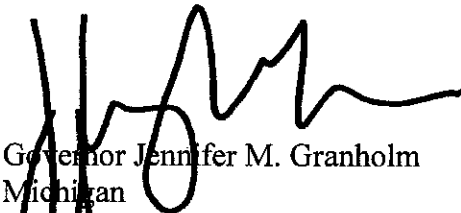
Governor Pat Quinn  
Illinois



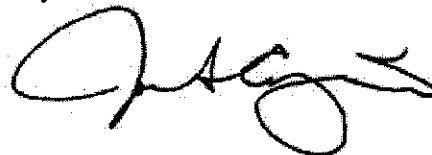
Governor Chester J. Culver  
Iowa



Governor Martin O'Malley  
Maryland



Governor Jennifer M. Granholm  
Michigan



Governor Jon S. Corzine  
New Jersey



Governor Bill Richardson  
New Mexico




Governor David A. Paterson  
New York



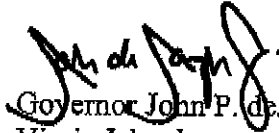
Governor Beverly Perdue  
North Carolina



Governor Theodore R. Kulongoski  
Oregon



Governor Timothy M. Kaine  
Virginia



Governor John P. deJongh Jr.  
Virgin Islands



Governor Christine O. Gregoire  
Washington



Governor Jim Doyle  
Wisconsin

- Cc: The Honorable Max Baucus,
- The Honorable Charles Grassley
- The Honorable Ted Kennedy
- The Honorable Mike Enzi
- The Honorable Henry Waxman
- The Honorable Joe Barton
- The Honorable Charlie Rangel
- The Honorable Dave Camp
- The Honorable George Miller
- The Honorable Buck McKeon