

ACP

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*

January 21, 2007

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable George Voinovich
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Bingaman and Voinovich:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), representing 120,000 internal medicine physicians and medical students, I want to thank you for introducing the "Health Partnership Act." ACP is the largest medical specialty society and the second largest medical organization in the United States. We greatly appreciate your efforts to expand health insurance coverage for all Americans through state health reform projects. Federally supported state experimentation encourages innovation and allows for highly debated, yet rarely tested health reform proposals to reveal their strengths and weaknesses.

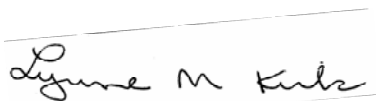
ACP supports expanding health insurance coverage for all under a system that promotes continuous quality improvement and the objective assessment of the effectiveness of care in terms of both cost and quality. We are therefore grateful that under this legislation, participating states would be measured not only on their ability to increase coverage and reduce cost, but also to increase quality and incorporate health information technology and other quality-enhancing infrastructure. It is critical that such measures be reliable, valid and based on sound scientific evidence.

ACP is also pleased that this legislation gives states the flexibility to test a variety of diverse reform options while still requiring important protections, such as provisions that establish minimum standards with regard to a plan's benefit and income standards, provisions that give priority to state programs that expand coverage among medically underserved and vulnerable populations, and provisions that minimize the negative effect of a state plan on employer groups and provider organizations. The voluntary nature of the state application process is much preferable to establishing an unfunded mandate for states, and we hope that the financial support necessary to encourage innovation will be forthcoming.

Finally, ACP supports the creation of a State Health Coverage Innovation Commission to oversee the selection of grant applications, monitor state progress, and report to the public on the progress made by each state plan. We are pleased that the legislation directs the Commission to allocate funding based on the state's ability to develop performance measures and goals and to evaluate and report to Congress on the progress of each state plan.

ACP is confident that this framework can succeed where other health reform proposals have failed. The "Health Partnership Act" offers the country an opportunity to learn from innovative programs while controlling health care costs and maintaining a safety net of standardized minimum benefits and quality standards. ACP commends you for your leadership in introducing this legislation. We look forward to working with you and lawmakers from both political parties in getting this legislation enacted into law.

Sincerely,



Lynne M. Kirk, M.D., FACP
President