

April 29, 2009

Dear Colleague:

Please join me in supporting S. 652, the Community Coalitions for Access and Quality Improvement (CCAQI) Act. This legislation provides grants to community health access coalitions to implement best practices proven to reduce health care costs, achieve better health outcomes and improve access to health care for uninsured and low-income Americans.

This bill builds on the success of previous federal investments in 250 community health access coalitions over the last decade and incorporates lessons learned from former Healthy Community Access Program (HCAP) grantees. Under HCAP, grantees leveraged \$6 for every federal dollar invested and provided access to health care to an additional 6.2 million individuals while generating \$2 billion a year in savings for health care purchasers nationwide.

Specifically, CCAQI directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to provide grants to community health access coalitions to improve efficiency and coordination among providers, assist local communities in developing programs targeted toward preventing and managing chronic diseases, and expand and enhance services provided. These best practice programs would help 600 communities nationwide utilize technology and joint planning to:

- Educate consumers about program eligibility and facilitate enrollment;
- Reduce inappropriate Emergency Room use by coordinating referrals to specialty care and mental health services;
- Support the primary care provided by Community Health Centers and Rural Health Clinics by organizing medical, mental health, and dental providers who care for the uninsured;
- Maximize access to free and reduced-price prescription drugs;
- Prevent the erosion of insurance coverage offered by small employers; and
- Improve the health status of low-income consumers of health care.

On March 19, 2009, S. 652 was introduced and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. To cosponsor this bill, or to request additional information, please contact Paula Burg my office at 4-2621.

Senator Patty Murray