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HELP COMMITTEE DEMOCRATS CALL FOR HEALTH REFORM

Cite need of millions of Americans who have lost their health insurance during the economic downturn

WASHINGTON, DC— Senator Chris Dodd and Senator Patty Murray, senior Democrats on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today held a press conference to call attention to the millions of Americans who have lost their health insurance during the economic downturn.

They were joined by Families USA, who brought an ambulance outfitted with a digital ticker that counts the number of Americans who have lost their health insurance since January 1, 2008. According to a study published in Health Affairs, 6.9 million people will lose their health insurance during the time period from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2010. Families USA has calculated that means more than 6,000 people per day. The ambulance's ticker will continue to count the number of people who have lost their health insurance until health reform is passed.

The Affordable Health Choices Act, currently being marked up by the HELP Committee, would reduce health care costs and provide access to quality and affordable health care for all Americans.

“Each year, 80 to 90 million people go without health insurance for some period of time. That costs Connecticut businesses \$2 billion a year in productivity, hits the average American family with a \$1,000 ‘hidden tax.’ And then there’s the human cost – Americans who can’t get the care they need to be well. Every day we don’t take action, another 100 people in Connecticut lose their insurance. People who are uninsured need coverage. People who are underinsured need better, more affordable choices. And people who like the insurance they have need to know that they won’t lose it even if something happens to their health or their job,” said Senator Dodd.

“We have to find a way to provide health care coverage to all Americans. Doing nothing isn't the prescription to our health care crisis. The status quo isn't the cure,” Senator Murray said. “We are all focused on getting our economy moving again, but we can't do it without reforming our health care system.”

“Due to the economic downturn, more and more people are losing their jobs and their health care coverage,” said Ron Pollack, Executive Director of Families USA. “Inaction on health care reform in 2009 cannot be an option for the tens of millions of people who lack or lose health coverage each year. The cost of doing nothing is much too high: More and more people would

fail to get the health care they need or would risk being bankrupted by unaffordable health care costs.”

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