

A Perspective on Current Health Reform Issues from Mayo Clinic
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Mayo Clinic Encouraged by Senate Health Care Reform

As leaders in Washington work on the final details of the health care reform plan, Mayo Clinic remains firmly committed to reform now more than ever. As we've said before, the status quo is simply not an option.

Since its inception over three years ago, the Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center has focused on reforming health care to improve access, quality and affordability for all patients. This remains the lens through which we examine all proposed reform legislation. The goal of health care reform should be to create a health care system that provides all Americans with better care at lower cost.

Much in the Senate Manager's Amendment is aligned with our recommendations—including provisions to pay for value in health care, an insurance exchange, an individual mandate, subsidies for people to achieve coverage, and pilot projects on accountable care organizations and bundling of payments.

Senate leadership made a wise decision to drop plans to expand Medicare eligibility. We also applaud the Senate for not pursuing a Medicare-like, price controlled public option. As we've said, we must build health care reform upon what's working... not on a failing Medicare system.

Mayo Clinic supports the proposed insurance exchange model based on the Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP). This system will improve access to insurance, make reforms to the current insurance system that eliminate pre-existing condition exclusions and create an individual mandate where individuals can purchase private insurance in various ways. We also believe that the government should help people pay for insurance premiums through sliding scale subsidies as needed.

There is still much to be done. Most importantly, Congress needs to find a permanent fix to the physician payment system so that our nation's doctors can provide full access to health care to Medicare recipients in all regions of the country. Lawmakers must move Medicare toward a system that pays for value rather than instituting across the board reductions to doctors and hospitals, which will harm the high quality, lower cost providers the most.

While encouraged by the Senate bill, Mayo Clinic will neither endorse nor oppose entire bills in the House or Senate, but will continue to point out provisions that we think move the country toward patient-centered health care goals.

This perspective is written by Jeffrey O. Korsmo, Executive Director, Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center; and Bruce Kelly, Director of Government Relations, Mayo Clinic.