

American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)

Universal health care with a basic benefit package guaranteed to all individuals

Organization Description: AAFP is a national association representing approximately 94,000 family doctors across the nation. AAFP advocates for the rights and needs of family physicians. It promotes high quality and cost effective medical care and patient education.

Proposal Summary: AAFP crafted a health care reform proposal in 2001, which advocates for a national health system with a basic set of benefits offered to all individuals. AAFP's advocacy agenda also addresses other health care topics, including health IT, health care cost containment, health care quality and Medicare physician payment reform. In addition to their own proposal, AAFP has joined the Physician Coalition¹ and the Health Coverage Coalition for the Uninsured (HCCU)² to promote principles to reform the U.S. health care system.

- **Coverage:** AAFP's 2001 comprehensive reform proposal supports a national health system offering a basic level of care for all individuals. To achieve this goal, AAFP proposes to establish a public/private national health board to determine what coverage would be included in the basic benefits package. The proposal would also implement a national payment system for services covered under the plan using a resource-based relative value system with a single conversion factor that is adequate for covered services.

The Physician Coalition supports affordable health care coverage for all U.S. residents, including catastrophic coverage. HCCU's proposal initially aims to remove barriers for children to enroll in established public programs. The plan would also give tax credits to families to help offset the cost of purchasing health insurance for all children. The second phase of the initiative concentrates on expanding Medicaid eligibility to cover all adults with incomes below the federal poverty level. For those with higher incomes, HCCU recommends establishing a refundable tax credit to help cover the cost of private insurance.

- **Wellness and Prevention:** AAFP's comprehensive reform proposal would require all insurers to offer a basic benefits package that includes preventive and screening procedures.
- **Health Information Technology (Health IT):** AAFP currently advocates for federal financial incentives to small and medium-sized physician practices to purchase electronic health record systems. It would designate a mechanism to establish federal standards of interoperability to ensure all health IT systems can transfer pertinent health data. The organization also supports assistance programs to help small practices through the cycle of selecting and implementing systems and redesigning their clinical workflow. The Physician Coalition seeks sufficient funding to build a comprehensive infrastructure and implementation scheme for health IT.

¹The Physician Coalition represents ten of the nation's leading physician associations, which form a united voice for doctors in the national policy debate.

²The HCCU is comprised of sixteen national organizations that play leading roles in every aspect of federal health policy, including health plans, provider groups, advocacy organizations, a business alliance, and a pharmaceutical manufacturer.

- **Quality:** AAFP supports pay-for-performance initiatives and the development and application of performance measures that are (1) aimed at improving important processes and outcomes of care in terms that matter to patients; (2) responsive to informed patients' cultures, values and preferences; (3) based on best evidence; (4) practical given variations of systems and resources; (5) cognizant of the burden of data collection; and (6) updated regularly. The Physician Coalition's reform principles emphasize the need for better health care quality and research to deliver care in a safe and cost-effective manner.
- **Cost:** AAFP's 2001 reform proposal would fund a universal health care plan using tax financing methods such as additional sales or value-added taxes, increased tobacco and alcohol taxes or a health insurance premium surcharge. Today, AAFP advocates for cost effectiveness screening of government-run health care programs. AAFP encourages increased emphasis on preventive care by having health plans reimburse preventive medical care at rates equal to or greater than those reimbursed for acute medical care. It supports increasing cost awareness and cost effectiveness in medical education. It supports more patient education about cost-effective medical care and cost containment via informational programs emphasizing personal responsibility for healthy lifestyles and cost-effective medical care. Lastly, AAFP supports the use of deductibles and copayments to emphasize cost containment, as long as these tools do not hinder access to quality health care. The Physician Coalition's proposal emphasizes that the responsibility of funding universal health care is a cooperative effort between the private and public arenas. It also seeks to limit expenditures through better health care management and administrative simplification. HCCU would fund its proposal through the expansion of public programs and refundable tax credits for individuals.

Proposal Date: 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007

Sources: *Assuring Health Care Coverage for All: A Plan by the American Academy of Family Physicians*, 2001, http://www.aafp.org/online/etc/medialib/aafp_org/documents/membership/hccfa/proposal.Par.0001.File.tmp/hccfa.pdf; *Health Care Costs - Methods for Reducing*, 2002, <http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/h/healthcarecosts.html>; *Performance Measures Criteria*, 2005, <http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/p/performancecriteria.html>; *Pay-for-Performance*, 2005, <http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/p/payforperformance.html>; *Health Care Costs - Methods for Reducing*, 2006; *Medicare Physician Reimbursement Issues*, 2006, <http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/federal/background-on-federal-issues/reimbursement.html>; *Health Information Technology Recommendations*, 2006, <http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/federal/background-on-federal-issues/ehrs.html>; *Physician Coalition: Principles for Reform of the US Health Care System*, 2007, <http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/membership/initiatives/hrsprinciples.html>; *HCCU: Press Release*, 2007, http://www.coalitionfortheuninsured.org/news/pressrelease_20070118.html.