

Alliance to Fight for Health Care

January 26, 2021

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, and incoming members of the Administration:

The Alliance to Fight for Health Care, is a diverse coalition working to ensure access to affordable, comprehensive health coverage for all Americans, even during an unprecedented global health and economic crisis. To that end, we thank you for calling on Congress in your “American Rescue Plan” to subsidize continuation health coverage (COBRA) and to expand and increase the value of the Premium Tax Credit (“PTC”). Our broad-based coalition includes consumer and patient advocacy groups, labor unions, employers, health plans, and others dedicated to protecting and expanding health coverage and supporting employer-sponsored health insurance.

We thank the Administration for its primary commitment to carrying out the public health and economic steps necessary to lessen the effects of the pandemic, deliver much-needed relief to working families, and develop evidenced-based methods to re-open our schools and businesses. We also applaud your call for effective, equitable distribution of treatments and vaccines including your goal to deliver 100 million vaccines in the first 100 days of your presidency. We are hopeful that broad vaccine distribution will represent a turning point and we believe that employers and health plans will play a critical role in ramping up vaccination deployment and education. We stand ready and willing to support you in this effort.

Health coverage is a vital component of our economic recovery. We are committed to working with you and Congress to implement your proposal to subsidize COBRA, which we respectfully request also include church plan continuation coverage, and to expand and increase the value of the PTC. Losing a job due to this pandemic should not mean losing health coverage. By shoring up pathways to retain coverage, we can advance health equity and stabilize access to health coverage when needed most. Employer-provided coverage offers comprehensive, affordable coverage for the majority of Americans at every income level, but we know the effects of this pandemic have been felt disproportionately by Black, Hispanic, and Asian Americans. Coverage losses have been nearly double in communities of color than losses experienced by white individuals. Subsidizing COBRA and church plan continuation coverage and expanding the PTC are essential for an equitable recovery from this pandemic. These important measures can make other policy proposals in the “American Rescue Plan” such as expanded unemployment insurance or direct monetary assistance stretch further. As you consider critical steps to mitigate the havoc caused by COVID-19, we urge you to continue to prioritize preserving high-quality health coverage for working Americans and their families.

Since relaunching in March 2020, the Alliance has proposed a range of balanced proposals that, if enacted, would strengthen our health care system. These proposals include targeted, meaningful changes that can be enacted separately or together. We have attached ten ideas for your consideration to this letter. We stand ready to support your efforts to protect and build on the stability of our health care system and the health coverage of millions of Americans during this global pandemic. We look forward to discussing these ideas and working together to fight for better health care for all Americans.

Sincerely,

The Alliance to Fight for Health Care

*The Alliance to Fight for Health Care is a broad-based coalition comprised of businesses, patient advocates, private sector, public sector and faith-based employer organizations, unions, health care companies, consumer groups and other stakeholders that support employer-provided health coverage. The Alliance is committed to ensuring that employer-provided coverage remains an effective and affordable option for working Americans and their families, especially during times of global health and economic crisis. The coalition (previously working as the **Alliance to Fight the 40**), led the successful effort to repeal the so-called 40% “Cadillac Tax” on health care coverage.*

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Ten ideas to strengthen our health care system

As you consider policies to mitigate the disruption caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic, **The Alliance to Fight for Health Care** continues to offer policy proposals supporting critical health care needs. Here are **10 ideas** to improve our health care system and support the well-being of Americans.

Support affected employers to help them retain their employees and maintain health care coverage as we move towards recovery:

1. Support those who have lost their job by providing at least a **95% COBRA subsidy until six months after the end of the emergency declaration.**
2. Encourage employers to **maintain ESI by modifying the Employee Retention Tax Credit** to make health care coverage a 100% reimbursable expense on top of current amounts allowed for wages.
3. **Extend PPP funding**, which has proven to be a critical component of maintaining employee health coverage throughout the pandemic.
4. Support employers struggling to maintain health coverage by providing them access to federal funds in the form of **interest free loans or grants** for employee health care-related expenses.
5. **Eliminate penalties for income variability** by issuing guidance that unpredictable income variability will not result in IRS claw backs for people electing individual market coverage during the crisis.
6. Assist furloughed employees by allowing them to pay for **premiums with their HSAs** during the pandemic.
7. Encourage individuals without health insurance to obtain coverage by increasing the number of individuals eligible for premium assistance by **raising the income limits above 400%** of the federal poverty level for PTC in the individual market.
8. Improve the pandemic response and enable more robust telehealth offerings by requiring **provider licensing across state lines.**
9. Expand access to care by making permanent the provision of **telehealth services below the deductible in HSA-eligible plans.**
10. **Engage employers in vaccine distribution** to ensure 100 million shots in 100 days becomes a reality.

The Alliance to Fight for Health Care is a broad-based coalition comprised of businesses, patient advocates, employer organizations, unions, local governments, health care companies, consumer groups and other stakeholders that support employer-provided health coverage – and we continue our work through an enhanced voice as a COVID-19 Response Team. The Alliance COVID-19 Response Team efforts are designed to ensure that employer-provided coverage remains an effective and affordable option for working Americans and their families, especially during times of global health and economic crisis. The coalition (previously working as the Alliance to Fight the 40), led the successful effort to repeal the so-called 40% “Cadillac Tax” on health care coverage.