

Nevada's "Legislative Committee on Health Care"
Rep. Dina Titus Testimony
July 20, 2010

Thank you, Madame Chairman and members of the Committee for giving me this opportunity to testify. I'm Dina Titus, Congresswoman for Nevada's third district. I wish I could be there in person, and I appreciate the chance to speak with you about health care reform.

Health care reform legislation is a topic that has certainly been on everyone's mind over the past year and a half. I know that later this morning you will be discussing the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, the historic health care reform legislation signed into law by President Obama this past March.

I voted in support of the health care reform legislation because I believe that the status quo was unacceptable, and that the legislation will provide security and stability to middle-class families by reducing costs, improving access, increasing choice, and strengthening Medicare. I don't have to tell you that even before the current economic crisis, Nevada was a state with one of the highest percentages of people without insurance in the country. Now when unemployment has reached record highs, a lost job can also mean lost health insurance and one medical emergency can mean the difference between paying the mortgage or not. Health care reform could not have come at a better time.

Nevada residents are already seeing some of the benefits of the legislation:

- parents can breathe easier knowing that their child with a pre-existing condition cannot be denied coverage,
- recent college graduates are able to stay on their parents' insurance coverage,
- seniors who fall into the Medicare Part D "donut hole" are receiving \$250 rebates,
- small businesses are finding out about the tax credits they are eligible for this year for voluntarily providing health care coverage to their employees, and
- those with insurance know they will not have their coverage taken away when they get sick and need it most.

I encourage you all to encourage people to go to the website, healthcare.gov, for more details on the schedule of when various parts of the legislation kick in.

These provisions will have a big impact in Nevada, and I'd like to share some Nevada-specific numbers with you:

- Approximately 30,300 small businesses can benefit from tax credits to provide coverage to their workers and make premiums more affordable.
- Roughly 28,000 Medicare beneficiaries who fall into the donut hole will receive a \$250 rebate this year.
- An estimated 38,600 early retirees (55-64 years old) may benefit from an early retiree reinsurance program.
- The bill will improve coverage for the 1.5 million residents with private health insurance.

- Roughly 9,470 young adults will be able to stay on their parent's insurance plan.
- The legislation will provide tax credits and other assistance to up to 597,000 families to help them afford coverage,
- Extend coverage to 360,000 uninsured residents,
- Guarantee that 68,400 residents with pre-existing conditions can obtain coverage, and
- Protect 9,300 families from bankruptcy due to unaffordable health care costs.

Additionally, the bill will provide millions of dollars in new funding for 33 community health centers in the state, reduce the cost of uncompensated care for hospitals and other health care providers by \$166 million annually, and provide access to federal Medicaid funding for coverage of all low-income populations, regardless of age, disability, or family status.

I am very proud that so many important provisions were included in health care reform, and I cannot believe anyone could want to repeal these vital consumer protections.

This bill requires a true partnership between the federal government and the states. From reviewing insurance rate increases to establishing and running the state insurance exchange beginning in 2014, the state of Nevada has a vital role to play. I hope that the State will be an active and willing partner in implementing health care reform so that Nevadans can reap the full benefits of the law. I understand why the State opted out of having its own high-risk pool in face of the projected budget deficits but I hope you'll take full advantage of other provisions such as those you're discussing today. For example, there are many demonstration projects the state can apply for: Medicare pilot projects for medical homes and long-term care; pilot programs for states to apply for rewards for people participating in wellness programs in the individual market; a Medicaid pilot for bundled payments; and medical malpractice alternative demonstration grants.

I will do my part from Washington to support efforts to make this partnership work. For example, the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* which I supported has provided Nevada with almost \$400 million in increased federal funding for Medicaid through an enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP). And in recognition of the tough fiscal climate the state is in, I have been fighting hard to continue the enhanced FMAP for another six months. I have repeatedly signed letters to leadership in the House asking that we be given the opportunity to vote on an extension of the increased FMAP funding; I am a cosponsor of a bill that would provide that funding; and you can be sure that I will continue to fight for that funding.

I also know that later today you will be discussing draft legislation regarding federal school food programs. I am pleased to tell you that we are also working on legislation at the federal level that will strengthen and expand these important programs. I am inspired by Chairman Weiner's long time work to combat obesity. I sit on the House Education and Labor Committee which just last week approved the *Improving Nutrition for America's Children Act*. I was proud to vote in support of the legislation, which included a bill I had introduced called the *Weekends Without Hunger Act*. My bill will help make sure that children do not go hungry by creating a pilot program to provide nutritious food to at risk school children over the weekend and during school holidays over the school year. Vacation from school should not mean hunger for children. The

bill will provide \$10 million for five years to support food banks like Three Square in giving out backpacks of food for children to take home over the weekends. It now goes to the floor of the House. A similar bill is working its way through the Senate.

Thank you again for providing me this opportunity to testify about the health care legislation. I look forward to working with you as implementation of health care reform moves forward. Please let me know how I can help and send me any white papers or information the Committee puts together. Your reports are very helpful to me as I try to complement your great efforts to serve the people Nevada.