



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2009

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FAH PRESIDENT CHIP KAHN PRAISES COMMITTEE FOR ADVANCING HEALTH REFORM AGENDA

In testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee today on the House of Representatives' Tri-Committee Health Reform discussion draft bill, Federation of American Hospitals President Chip Kahn praised the Committee for advancing the health reform agenda, and urged action.

"In my view, we are at one of those inflection points in history when health reform is not only possible but desperately needed because too many Americans lack access to affordable, quality health care. It is time for action, and the Tri-Committee draft gives us a roadmap for reform," according to Mr. Kahn.

Mr. Kahn thanked the Committee for focusing foremost on coverage expansions, and for providing a public forum for discussion that welcomes constructive criticism.

"FAH is particularly pleased that the primary goal of the discussion draft is to ensure that affordable health coverage is available for all Americans," Mr. Kahn said, adding that the Committee draft generally meets the principles of reform reflected in FAH's detailed health reform proposal, "Health Coverage Passport", issued two years ago. These include subsidies for Americans who need it; building on employer-based coverage; reforming the insurance system; and a requirement that individuals obtain coverage.

Mr. Kahn expressed reservations, however, with the government-run public option defined in the draft. "In our view, the public option is not necessary to achieve successful reform," he commented. "If the Committee believes an alternative is necessary, we suggest it consider a non-governmental, non-profit or co-op model," he added.

Mr. Kahn expressed his appreciation for several other key elements of the draft, including a ban on self-referral to physician-owned hospitals and preserving DSH payments. "We deeply appreciate that the draft recognizes the multiple safety net-related purposes of DSH payments," he stated.

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The Federation of American Hospitals is the national representative of investor-owned or managed hospitals and health systems. Our members include general community and teaching hospitals in urban and rural areas as well as rehabilitation, long-term acute care, cancer, and psychiatric hospitals.