



## BUSINESS COUNCIL OF ALABAMA

### HEALTH CARE REFORM

**Our Position: The Business Council of Alabama supports meaningful, common sense health care reform that will cure the problems that plague us now – not create new ones.**

Alabama's business community shares the goals of Congress to reduce the costs of health care and to increase the public's access to quality health care services. However, as the voluntary providers of health care to millions of Alabamians and Americans, it is essential that businesses and industries are not negatively affected by the reforms.

Employers provide health care benefits not only because they are committed to helping their employees and their families meet their health care needs, but also because it makes solid business sense. However, since 1999, employment-based health insurance premiums have risen dramatically, and at a much higher cumulative rate than inflation and wage growth. If we fail to reform our health care system, rising costs will threaten the viability of businesses of all sizes and put job security and benefits at risk for millions of employees.

With a direct and very real stake in the outcome of health reform efforts, employers have led the way in seeking a higher quality, evidence-based health care system. And, as the nation seeks to implement change, the business community remains firmly committed to helping forge solutions that will address delivery system shortcomings, bring costs down and foster continuous quality improvement. We are equally committed in our opposition to proposals that will threaten already struggling businesses with increased costs, taxes, fees, mandates and regulatory burdens.

#### **The Business Council of Alabama supports Health Care Reform efforts that:**

- **will retain viable employer-sponsored health care.** Any reform effort must build on the proven strengths of America's voluntary, employer-based system.
- **will retain associated tax credits/deductions.** Faced with severe and continuing economic challenges, employers simply are not able to absorb additional cost burdens. It will be by making it easier -- not harder or more expensive -- for employers to provide health care coverage that we will strengthen the security of our nation's health and economy.
- **will not create a Public Plan option.** The business community believes that market-driven health care reforms are the best approach to reducing costs, improving efficiency, promoting wellness and strengthening quality of care. A Public Plan option will drive companies out of business and lead to a government-controlled health insurance system.
- **will not impose additional tax burdens or mandates on individuals or businesses.** Employer mandates, including requirements to "play or pay," will only increase our challenges. Employer mandates limit flexibility and innovation – the foundation of voluntary employer-provided health care. The implementation of new taxes and fees for businesses and/or individuals that cannot afford health insurance would be dramatically counterproductive, and is clearly the wrong way to go about an attempt to increase the number of Americans with health care coverage.

