

**Statement of Jo Linder, M.D., Chair, Maine Medical Association Executive Committee,
before the Honorable Olympia J. Snowe, United States Senator, April 7, 2009.**

Senator Snowe, Dr. Pewen and guests. Thank you for the opportunity to represent Maine's physicians this morning and share with you briefly the position of the Maine Medical Association on the important issue of healthcare reform facing you and the Senate Finance Committee when you get back to Washington. The Maine Medical Association represents the interests of over 3000 physicians, medical students and residents in the state and has been an advocate for Maine's patients and physicians since its founding in 1853. The results of a recent survey of our membership showed that providing coverage for the uninsured was the most important issue identified by our members.

The one point that I believe all organizations represented around this table agree on is that, with respect to America's health care, the status quo is unacceptable. Continuing on the present course is not an option. The Maine Medical Association recognizes this, as does the American Medical Association.

The AMA recently endorsed with several other national organizations, several general principles that should apply to any reform proposal, including increased focus on wellness and prevention, increased coverage through expansion of the private health insurance market with an intact sustainable public safety net for vulnerable populations. The AMA, through its giving voice to the uninsured campaign, has supported the principle of universal coverage through a private/public partnership for several years.

The Maine Medical Association also supports universal access. Significantly, both the AMA and the MMA also support getting to the goal of universal coverage through the vehicle of an individual health insurance mandate, similar to the law in Massachusetts which has succeeded in providing nearly universal coverage in the Bay State. There is quite a lot of evidence in the research showing that even if you provide public subsidies to those persons who cannot afford the cost, many persons will still not choose to purchase insurance. We believe that it is reasonable therefore to require persons to purchase insurance, and to provide subsidies where appropriate.

Let me close by acknowledging that providing universal coverage is only part of the solution to the current problems. Controlling costs and improving quality are equally important goals, goals that many initiatives in Maine are actively pursuing. Policy makers in Washington could learn a lot from the several initiatives that you will learn more about this morning from the organizations represented around the table. I will leave for others the details of the patient centered medical home initiative and the efforts to improve quality through the examination of variation analysis and other efforts of the Maine Quality Forum, Quality Counts and other similar efforts represented around this table.

Thank you for your time and for your leadership on this issue, and thank you for providing MMA and MHA with the opportunity to host this important event.