

Health Care for Women, Health Care for All A REFORM AGENDA



The consequences of unavailable or unaffordable health insurance are felt by all of us. Uninsured and underinsured patients delay or forgo needed care, turning treatable conditions into complex and expensive health care events, and increasing the cost of health care for everyone. And our fragmented health care system impedes progress toward the quality and safety goals on which we all agree. Everyone's health care security is at risk.

The question is no longer whether we need to reform our health care system, but how do we do it and how soon. As more patients, health care providers, businesses, insurers, and lawmakers demand change, now is the time to reach common ground on solutions and move beyond rhetoric to results.

The **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)** has called for universal access to maternity care since 1971 and works for reform of the U.S. health care system with a focus on policies that advance women's health. The following principles are essential for achieving universal health care that meets women's lifetime health needs.

Cover everyone. Health coverage should be accessible and affordable to everyone in the U.S., regardless of citizenship or residency status. If reforms are phased-in, universal coverage of pregnant women and infants should be the first priority.

Guarantee benefits. A reformed health care system will promote prevention, especially prenatal care and contraception, continuity of care, and a medical home and core services for women. These benefits will be guaranteed to all women, whether coverage is through private insurance or a public plan, and regardless of income, employment, health status, or where they live.

Engage employers, individuals and governments. Build on the strengths of our private-public financing and delivery system with coverage requirements for employers and individuals and improved public coverage.

Make coverage affordable. Small businesses, the self-employed and low-income families who are currently priced out of the health care market would be guaranteed an affordable plan. Discrimination based on health status, gender and other factors must be eliminated. Emphasizing prevention, reducing administrative costs, and fixing our broken medical liability system can lower health care costs for everyone.

Enhance quality and patient safety. Our health system should strive for continual quality improvement—through medical education, physician-driven quality programs, health information technology, and research to determine the most effective evidence-based treatments. Quality and safety reforms should always put our patients' welfare and best interests first.

