

COALITION FOR HEALTH FUNDING

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The Chairs of the Platform Committee
Democratic National Committee
430 South Capitol Street, SE
Washington, D.C. 20003

RE: Inclusion of language supporting strengthening of the continuum of federal public health activities

Dear Platform Committee Chairs:

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent anthrax attacks, the public has become acutely aware of the role of public health in protecting them from the health consequences of terrorism involving biological, chemical, or nuclear agents. While local, state and federal agencies have a leading role in preparing for and responding to this threat, all aspects of our health and public health system are critical to the success of this effort.

But the challenges facing us in the public health arena are broader, deeper, and more complex than the problems posed by preparing for terrorist attacks involving biological, chemical or radiological agents. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently reported that health care spending in the United States rose to \$1.6 trillion in 2002, up from \$1.3 trillion in 2000. Health expenditures per person averaged \$5,440 in 2002, up from \$4,670 in 2000. Significant factors driving this increase are the aging of the U.S. population, and the rapid rise in chronic diseases, many caused or exacerbated by obesity, tobacco use or substance abuse, environmental exposures, or injury. Nearly 125 million Americans are living with one or more chronic conditions and disabilities, like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, arthritis, asthma, mental illness and Alzheimer's Disease. At the same time, our increasingly global economy exposes our citizens to a multitude of continuing and emerging infectious disease threats, some of which are becoming increasingly resistant to drugs designed to treat them.

Conquering these health challenges will require persistent vigilance by a robust health and public health system that is technologically equipped for rapid analysis and communication, and staffed by adequate numbers of well-trained, diverse health and public health professionals and workers. **Today, none of these public health needs is being fully addressed and yet stronger investment in the continuum of biomedical, behavioral and health services research; disease prevention and health promotion; health care services for medically underserved populations; health professions training; and**

protection of the nation's food and drug supply has the potential for significantly slowing the unsustainable growth in health care expenditures. The Federal government is currently spending approximately \$50 billion on public health agencies and programs. This is three percent of all health care spending, according to CMS, and less than 10 percent of all Medicare and Medicaid spending. We can and must do better, because a healthy America is a strong America.

The Coalition for Health Funding would greatly appreciate your including in the 2004 Democratic National Platform the following language:

“Strengthening Public Health. Democrats support an increased investment in the whole continuum of public health activities within the U.S. Public Health Service as the optimal way to achieve improved health outcomes, protect Americans against the health consequences of terrorist attacks, and slow the growth of mandatory health care spending. Strengthening biomedical, behavioral and health services research, improving community-based disease prevention and health promotion, ensuring health care services for the medically underserved, preserving a safe food and drug supply, and training health and public health professionals in sufficient numbers to meet the breadth of need are essential to improve and protect the health of all Americans.”

The Coalition for Health Funding, founded in 1970, is the oldest, most broadly based alliance of national health organizations focused on federal health discretionary spending. Please visit our web site for additional information: www.aamc.org/advocacy/healthfunding

Sincerely,

David B. Moore
President