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## **CARDIN URGES SENATE TO ACT ON BEHALF OF 46 MILLION UNINSURED AMERICANS**

*“We need act now to reform our health care system and reduce costs for all”*

Washington, DC – **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)** spoke from the floor of the Senate on Wednesday to urge his colleagues to move forward quickly with health care reform that will benefit all Americans. He spoke of the inherent value of preventive care and the critical need for a public insurance option based on choice.

*Senator Cardin’s full remarks are available at [cardin.senate.gov](http://cardin.senate.gov).*

“We are in a health care crisis in America. The cost of health care is not sustainable. Per capita, we spend twice as much as the next most expensive nation in the world on health care. \$2.4 trillion per year – 15 percent of our Gross Domestic Product – is spent on health care. Those numbers are increasing dramatically each and every year. A debate over the future over the state of our health care system is long overdue.

“We have 46 million Americans today who have no health insurance. When they need treatment, they are very costly to all of us. They wait until simple health problems become unavoidable. They use the emergency rooms. They don’t get life-saving and money-saving preventive health care. There are approximately 760,000 Marylanders who do not have health insurance, including 15.4 percent of our non-elderly population.

“We must reform our health care system by building on what’s right, correcting what’s wrong, and reducing costs for all. The first thing that needs correcting is the cost; we need to bring it down. The best way to reduce costs is for everyone to be in the system. I congratulate the committees for bringing forward proposals that include universal coverage, which I have long advocated as a prerequisite for real reform.

“I’m also somewhat bewildered by the recent discussion criticizing a public insurance option because I don’t hear too many of my colleagues suggesting that the Medicare system should be done away with. The last time I checked, Medicare was a public insurance program. Our seniors and disabled citizens go to private doctors and private hospitals. They have a choice. Despite the rhetoric, a public option is about who pays for the system not who provides the care.

“I applaud all those in the Senate and the House who are seriously engaged in this important discussion. I think we can all learn from each other and, if we work in good faith, I think we can develop a health care reform proposal that will maintain quality and provide access and affordability to every family in America. This should be our objective.”

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