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July 20, 2009

SENATOR CARDIN HOLDS HEALTH CARE TOWN HALL MEETING IN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

He Calls for Passage of Health Reform, Saying "Inaction Not an Option"

LARGO, MD – **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin** (D-MD) this evening held a Town Hall Meeting at Prince George's Community College to discuss the various health care proposals that are before Congress. The Senator said expanding health care coverage to all Americans "is one of our nation's most pressing priorities."

"We cannot afford the current health care system we have -- a system in which last year we spent \$2.4 trillion on health care while failing to provide health care to approximately 46 million Americans," said **Senator Cardin**, a member of the Senate Budget Committee. Prince George's County health officials estimate that there are approximately 150,000 uninsured or underinsured residents in the county.

"Our doctors and hospitals may practice the best medicine in the world, but we have a health care system that is seriously ill. Of the 191 countries ranked by the World Health Organization on overall health systems performance, we ranked 37th -- behind France, Canada, and Chile, just to mention a few. While we rank No.1 in health care expenditures, we are only 24th on health life expectancies," he said.

Senator Cardin said that our first priority must be to bring down costs and universal coverage is the best, most efficient way to achieve that goal.

"Today, millions of Americans who have no insurance rely on expensive emergency room visits for their primary care, often after they have become much sicker and more costly to treat. It is time that all Americans have access to a health care system that emphasizes preventive care, healthy life choices and that efficiently and effectively treats individuals with chronic illnesses."

Senator Cardin also called for a public option as a way to expand choice and to help reduce costs. "I support improving and expanding employer-based, private insurance coverage, but we also need a public option as a way to allow market forces to play a role in keeping costs down by creating greater competition."

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