

# Robert Menendez

United States Senator ☆ New Jersey



## Newsroom

Press Release of Senator Menendez

### AS HEALTH CARE REFORM TAKES CENTER STAGE IN CONGRESS, SENATOR MENENDEZ STANDS IN FAVOR OF EXPANDING INSURANCE OPTIONS

*At Passaic health center, Menendez says inclusion of "public plan" option help drive costs down in private insurance market, making health insurance accessible and affordable*

Monday, June 15, 2009

PASSAIC, NJ— Today, U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), stood in support of expanding health insurance options as part of national health care reform, which is taking center stage in Congress. Menendez supports including the "public plan" option, which would make available a variety of health insurance alternatives that are currently not available in the private insurance system. Senator Menendez, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, which is drafting a significant portion of the system's reform process, emphasized the importance of this public plan legislation, because it ensures increased access and affordability in the health care system. The "public plan" option provides consumers and small businesses with more choices and creates competition for private insurance companies that would drive prices down. Senator Menendez was joined by New Jersey union leaders and workers, as well as small business owner Jacqueline Germany, who has only been able to offer one employee health insurance benefit and exclude the other four because of high insurance costs.

"In the strongest nation on earth, access to quality and affordable health care too often doesn't exist," said Menendez. "I'm not just talking about the 47 million Americans with no health insurance at all. I'm talking about the millions of middle class families – working families – who have health insurance but simply don't have adequate health care. Expanding health insurance options gives us the opportunity to bring down costs by bringing competition into the industry. It would expand the marketplace, so employers and families can shop and choose the benefits plan that works for them."

U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-Paterson), who was unable to attend the conference, made the following statement in support of a public option, "A public health insurance option is about bringing competition to the health insurance marketplace, providing Americans with a choice and ultimately making health care more affordable. Families will never again have to choose between going to the doctor and paying their mortgage." Pascrell is a member of the Health Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee, the House counterpart to the Senate Finance Committee.

Standing alongside in support, union leaders and workers called attention to the importance of keeping working families and individuals at the center of this debate and protecting their choice between the public affordable insurance option and those offered by for-profit pharmaceutical companies:

"Having the choice of a public plan will help make health care more affordable for patients including our members, foster greater competition in the insurance market, and guarantee quality, affordable coverage will be there for everyone no matter what happens. We believe by seizing the moment and reforming our broken system, working families will be the re

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winners,” said Eric Scherzer, Executive Director of The Committee of Interns and Residents which is part of the 40,000 member NJ SEIU State Council.

Jacqueline Germany, owner of Nina’s Nuances in Montclair, NJ, joined Senator Menendez at a press conference. In business for eight years, Jacquie was able to hire five employees because health care costs were too high was only able to offer coverage to one of them. The downturn in the economy took its toll on Jacquie’s interior design business, and last November she was forced to start letting go of her employees until she was left with none. Jacquie expressed being in strong support of the public health insurance option and would be willing to pay her fair share to cover health care benefits for future employees. She believes that the health care crisis will be a major step toward reviving our economy. “As a small business owner, self-employed person and a citizen I have a vested interest in having a health care system that is affordable and allows the freedom of choice”

The “public plan” option has been endorsed by President Obama and by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus. The plan would provide Americans with the option of choosing an affordable public insurance plan (similar to Medicare) in addition to the choices offered through their employers. Small business would also be able to save costs by offering this health insurance option to their employees.

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