HEALTH REFORM AT A GLANCE:

ADDRESSING HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES

Within the United States, racial and ethnic minorities and other populations experience a broad range of disparities in disease burden, health outcomes, and access to quality health care. Expanding health insurance coverage will help to alleviate some of these disparities, but they must be accompanied by targeted strategies in both clinical and community-based health.

The bill contains a comprehensive set of provisions designed to ensure that health reform will meaningfully reduce or eliminate health and health care disparities.

HEALTH DISPARITIES PROVISIONS IN THE BILL:

- Strengthens and expands programs that promote diversity in the health workforce.
- Requires HHS Secretary to identify key health and health care disparities as part of a National Prevention and Wellness Strategy initiative.
- Directs the Task Force on Clinical Preventive Services and the Task Force on Community Preventive Services to take relevant health and health care disparities into account as they develop and disseminate evidence-based recommendations on the use of preventive services.
- Targets at least half of the funding in a new community-level preventive health grants program to proposals with the primary purpose of addressing health or health care disparities. Eligible grantees include "health empowerment zones," areas in which a community partnership provides multiple preventive health services.
- Establishes a new Assistant Secretary for Health Information who will coordinate and develop standards for the collection of key health information, including information that can be used to measure, study, and reduce health and health care disparities.
- Supports centers of excellence and health career opportunity programs to bring underrepresented minorities through the health workforce pipeline.
- Enhances the scholarship programs for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Improves access to care for limited English proficient beneficiaries by providing enhanced funding through Medicaid and initiating a demonstration program in Medicare to reimburse providers for the provision of language services.