



United
Jewish
Communities

The Federations of North America

Washington Action Office

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James Tisch
Chairman of the Board

May 30, 2003

Robert Goldberg
*Chairman of the
Executive Committee*

Dear Representative:

Steve Selig
*National Chairman
Campaign/FRD*

We are writing to urge your support for strengthening Medicare and creating a meaningful, universal, and affordable drug benefit for all seniors. United Jewish Communities is a national faith-based organization representing 156 local Jewish Federations and 400 independent communities that supports health and human services programs across the United States. Each year, this network provides vital assistance to more than one million Jewish seniors, families with young children, refugees and immigrants, and other struggling clients in the Jewish community and in the general population.

Michael Gelman
HSSP Chair

Stephen H. Hoffman
President & CEO

Diana Aviv
*Vice President,
Public Policy*

As the Medicare reform debate progresses over the next few weeks, we ask that you develop a proposal that meets the following recommendations to strengthen the Medicare program while providing for a meaningful, universal, and affordable prescription drug benefit.

Medicare reform should take into account the following recommendations:

- Medicare must be maintained as a social insurance and entitlement program, providing a comprehensive level of health coverage for all elderly;
- Traditional Medicare fee-for-service health coverage cannot be jeopardized; and
- Medicare should fill the gap in long-term care coverage, which is mostly covered by Medicaid and out-of-pocket fees, by adding some sort of long-term care insurance for chronic care stays in nursing homes as well as in a variety of home-and community-based settings, such as adult day care.

To develop a meaningful, universal, and affordable prescription drug benefit for Medicare recipients, we recommend the following:

- The basic prescription drug benefit should be available to all Medicare beneficiaries;
- Seniors should not feel pressured to move into private or costly plans in order to obtain prescription drug coverage;
- The benefit should be financially meaningful to seniors, for example premiums should be reasonable and out-of-pocket payments should be low;
- The prescription drug program should include expanded relief for low-income seniors; and
- Prescription drug coverage for mental illnesses must be expanded.

We strongly suggest you consider these recommendations when developing and debating Medicare reform and a prescription drug benefit. We appreciate your leadership on this issue. If you have any questions about United Jewish Communities' position on Medicare Reform, please contact Sara Strope at 202-736-5860.

Sincerely,

Diana Aviv
Director, Washington Action Office
Vice President, Public Policy