



**Passage of National Health Care Reform Press Conference
NJ Consumers, Small Businesses and Advocates Thank
Senator Robert Menendez**

Monday March 29, 2010 ~ 10:30 AM
Englewood Hospital, 350 Engle Street, Englewood, NJ 07631

Statement of Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, Executive Director, New Jersey Citizen Action

Good morning. My name is Phyllis Salowe-Kaye and I am the Executive Director of NJ Citizen Action, the State's largest, independent citizen watchdog organization representing over 60,000 family members and over 100 affiliated organizations across the State. Throughout our entire 25-year-plus history Citizen Action has worked to expand and improve access to health care for all New Jersey residents. This is a great day for our organization and marks a major milestone in this long fight. I am also here on behalf of our NJ For Health Care Coalition, a broad-based alliance of over 60 health care, consumer, and social justice organizations representing over 2 million members, fighting for guaranteed access to high quality, affordable health care for all. Our Coalition also led NJ's Health Care for America Now campaign, a grassroots national initiative that came together in the summer of 2008 with the goal of passing strong national health care reform through Congress.

Today we are here to thank a long time friend of NJ Citizen Action and one of our nation's Health Reform Congressional Champions -- Senator Robert Menendez. It is safe to say, we would not be standing here today without his hard work and commitment.

This historic reform will expand health coverage to 32 million people, including over 859,000 New Jerseyans, stop insurance company abuses, strengthen Medicaid and Medicare, close the donut hole for seniors and give all of us the security and peace of mind that if you lose your job, you will still have affordable health care.

This was a tough fight. Over the last 18-months our coalition - including many of our partners here today - AARP NJ, AFSCME, BlueWaveNJ, North Jersey Grassroots, CWA, SEIU, the Statewide Parents Advocacy Network, the NAACP, and the Health Professionals and Allied Employees - waged an intense battle to pass this bill.

We held more than two dozen rallies, marches, vigils and demonstrations; dozens of trainings and presentations to educate consumers; issued 16 health care policy reports demonstrating the need for and benefits of national health care reform; and met with Members of Congress time and again. Citizen Action also organized the NJ Main Street Alliance, a coalition representing 657 small business owners across New Jersey who have fought alongside us for reform. Together we generated tens of thousands of phone calls and knocked on thousands of doors from one end of the Garden State to the other.

While advocates were educating and organizing and through the hard work, late nights, and long weekends, our work was made easier knowing that Senator Menendez was on our side.

Certainly this is not the end of reform but it is an historic and great, great beginning. Because of our elected Representatives like Senator Menendez, New Jersey will be a better place and the lives of working families, their children and seniors will be made more secure. With the passage of this historic legislation, millions of people, including 854,000 New Jerseyans will receive subsidies to help them purchase health coverage. There will be caps on out-of-pocket costs and insurance companies won't be allowed to set limits on how much health care they'll cover for a person each year. Across the country hundreds of thousands of families will avoid financial bankruptcy from devastating medical bills. Insurance companies will no longer be allowed to deny us coverage for pre-existing conditions or drop our coverage when we get sick. There will be no more deductibles or co-pays for primary and preventative care. New Jersey small businesses will be eligible for tax credit to make premiums more affordable. We will invest in better medical technology, preventive medicine, the primary care workforce and encourage new and innovative improvements to our health system. In addition, health reform will create an estimated 250,000 - 400,000 jobs and reduce the deficit by \$138 billion over the first ten years.

On behalf of NJ Citizen, our partners, and the millions of people in New Jersey and across the country who will benefit from this historic legislation - thank you Senator Menendez!