

**STATEMENT  
OF  
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ON  
RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN HEALTH CARE  
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY  
July 15, 2009**

First I want to thank Health Care for America Now for this comprehensive report on racial and ethnic disparities in New Jersey. It shows that by nearly any measure, communities of color are not receiving the health care they need, and the situation is only getting worse. The much lower rates of health insurance and poorer health outcomes for African-Americans and Latinos compared to whites in the wealthiest state in the nation should be an embarrassment to all of us, and a call to action.

In addition to providing another reason to enact national health reform, this report also demonstrates the importance of supporting existing public programs that serve low- and moderate-income families. The Governor and the Legislature are to be commended during these tough economic times for at least not making fewer low-income parents eligible for FamilyCare, as well as not imposing co-payments on the poorest families in Medicaid, which would have disproportionately affected African-Americans and Latinos.

But we must do more than protect these program, we must improve them. For many years we had excellent polices in FamilyCare, such as the highest eligibility level in the nation for children. Yet the number of uninsured children has grown to 300,000 in New Jersey, a disproportionate number of who are children of color.

These families face many barriers, which often can only be overcome with special outreach efforts. For example, the Kaiser Foundation found that it takes face - to - face contact with Hispanic families by community organizations they trust before they are willing to enroll in these programs. New Jersey is just starting to do this in FamilyCare; hopefully this type of outreach can be improved and expanded to become a model for similar efforts.

“Build it and they shall come” may work in the Iowa cornfields, but not in health policy. That applies to the national level too. Enacting health reform that guarantees quality health coverage is the first step. But after that the real work begins: to make sure this goal is achieved for everyone.

Thank you.