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Reforming the health care system

- 1 WHEREAS the components of the health care system are so interrelated that no part can function well unless the system as a whole functions well;
- 2 WHEREAS the cost of health care is rapidly escalating and currently represents over 17 percent of the Federal budget and over 20 percent of each older person's annual household income;
- 3 WHEREAS 40 million Americans are uninsured, of which 25 percent are children;
- 4 WHEREAS the current health care system does not adequately promote and support preventive care;
- 5 WHEREAS Medicare covers less than 50 percent of all health care expenses of people age 65 and older, provides no outpatient drug coverage, and covers almost none of the cost of long-term care; and
- 6 WHEREAS the health care system is an important consideration in reducing the Federal budget deficit;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the 1995 White House Conference on Aging to support system-wide health care reform efforts that adhere to the following principles:

- 7 Congress should create by law a nationwide health care system that guarantees universal coverage; quality services; comprehensive benefits, including long-term institutional, home, and community-based services; efficient administration; broad-based financing; strong, system-wide cost containment; and that emphasizes health promotion and preventive services;
- 8 All Americans, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, physical or mental disability, or income, should have health security, including availability of and access to affordable, quality, physical and mental health care and long-term care, and a choice of providers and health plans;
- 9 Cost containment is a critical component of meaningful health care reform and must not be separate from the reform process;

- 10 Medicare's commitment to its beneficiaries must not be jeopardized by arbitrary cuts. Congress should resist calls for cuts which will damage the program, devastate the health care system, and adversely affect frontline health care workers. Any savings that may come from changes in Medicare and Medicaid as a result of health care reform should be applied to strengthen the programs and expand coverage, including long-term care, rather than to meet arbitrary deficit reduction targets. The use of savings in Medicare and Medicaid for tax cuts for well-off citizens should be prohibited;
- 11 Long-term care must include cost-effective alternatives, such as home and community care, as well as institutional services, as essential components of health reform; private long-term care insurance must include appropriate benefits, specific consumer protection, and safeguards;
- 12 Financial and regulatory incentives must be provided for health promotion and preventive services;
- 13 Additional research funding and early detection and treatment in the community should be emphasized to reduce total costs;
- 14 Improved consumer information and education, as well as strong quality assurance standards, must accompany health system reform to ensure quality care;
- 15 Where competing health plans and/or systems are available, clear explanations shall be furnished as to the inclusions and limitations of each offering;
- 16 Problems facing the Medicare and Medicaid programs should be addressed within the context of broad-based health care reform, as the President has proposed.

