AMERICAN BAPTIST
RESOLUTION ON HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

Healing is a significant sign and metaphor of biblical faith. The prophets of
the Old Testament and Jesus himself were healers. Physical well-being was
valued for its own sake as well as a sign of hope for the day when everyone
would share equally in the blessings of shalom.

Many of Jesus' miracles were miracles of healing. He touched and healed
lepers, restored sight, caused the lame to walk and renewed the life of the
woman who had suffered for years with a flow of blood. Christ's example (Mark
6:53-56) has inspired countless Christian health care workers including those
serving as missionaries. Clearly, we have understood Jesus' concern for
physical well-being as a commission to carry on that work of healing.

Today in the United States we have a health care system that is in crisis.
Health care providers, health office workers, health support staff, insurers,
and payers form a patchwork system without any coordination based on policy.

Health statistics tell an ugly story. At any given time in excess of 43
million people in the U.S., approximately one-seventh of the population, have
no health care coverage. They are not covered by private insurance,
employer-based insurance or government programs. Another 60 million people,
including a large proportion of the elderly, do not have adequate coverage.

In the U.S. we pay more for health care than other industrialized nations and
get less for our money. Health care costs are again on the rise. A study (2002)
by the Centers of Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) estimates an increase to
$2.8 trillion or 17% of GDP by 2011. Currently, it is 14% of the GDP.

Many people do not have health insurance and therefore go without basic health
care. They see physicians less often and die younger than those with
insurance. Even people with apparently good health insurance coverage have
hidden vulnerabilities when faced with paying for expensive medical
conditions. Catastrophic accidents or chronic long-term needs can bankrupt a
family.

Efforts at shifting costs among government agencies, private insurers, and
individual payers drain enormous amounts of energy and attention, and create
enormous additional bureaucratic and regulatory costs beyond the costs for the
health care itself.

Powerful forces seek to preserve the status quo, but we as American Baptists,
like many other citizens and public officials, believe that the time has come
for significant change.

Three general approaches dominate the national debate on universal access to
health care. One would merely seek to reform current health insurance
programs. The second is an aggregate of proposals under the umbrella term,
"managed competition." The third, the "single-payer" approach, is a publicly
financed system based on taxes with benefits paid by the government and with
services delivered by the government and with services provided by a mix of
private and public providers, as Canada does. All have negatives as well as
benefits.

In accordance with our 1975 Policy Statement on Health Care, we believe that
health care should be viewed as a right, not a privilege, and that the basic
goal for health care reform should be universal access to comprehensive
benefits.

Therefore, as American Baptists, we urge the President and Congress to work
together expeditiously to enact a health care reform which will extend health
care coverage to every person in the United States.
We seek a national health care system that:

- serves everyone in the United States
- provides comprehensive access, care, and services
- is sensitive to the needs and rights of health workers, patients, and their cultures
- promotes health awareness, disease prevention, nutrition, fitness, and safety
- slows the upward spiral of costs
- draws financial support from the broad base of the entire nation
- reduces unnecessary administrative costs
- reduces inappropriate medical procedures

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Policy Base

Policy Statement on Health, Healing and Wholeness

- advocate for the availability of, access to, and funding for quality health care for all persons; and
- advocate for availability of, access to, and funding for quality health care for all persons; and
- advocate for legislative health care measures.

American Baptist Policy Statement on Health Care

As American Baptists we affirm and support programs, legislation, research and other formulations which help develop a new comprehensive health care delivery system which provides quality services for all people.

1. Make health care resources, private and public, available in keeping with the total needs of people, rather than on the basis of economic, geographic or racial factors;

3. Provide equitable health care for all residents of the U.S.A. by eliminating financial barriers;