

## Remarks at CBC Special Order on Health Care

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Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. First of all, I want to commend Representative Marcia Fudge for the tremendous leadership that she continues to display each and every week by hosting, organizing, convening, and giving all of us the opportunity to discuss issues that are pertinent to all of America, but especially to the African American community.

I also want to commend Representative Donna Christensen for the outstanding leadership that she has displayed for a number of years as chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Brain Trust, and all of the members who consistently try and protect, promote, and project the health care needs and opportunities that should exist for all of us in America.

We are poised right now to do serious health reform. I want to commend President Obama for having the courage to tackle one of the most pernicious issues of our day, and that is the issue of trying to make sure that each and every American, that each and every one of our citizens have the opportunity to receive cost-effective, as comprehensively as we can provide it, quality health care that is culturally competent, provided by individuals who understand their needs and individuals that they can understand instructions and what is being given.

We are about to do something that has been needed, and that is we're going to expand--and I'm confident that we will do it. No matter which option people look at, no matter what kind of coverage they suggest, that when we finish, we're going to have the best health care delivery system that this country has ever seen.

In many instances, I don't think that we have to reinvent the wheel. Yes, there are large numbers of uninsured individuals in our country, probably about 50 million of them, and some of those individuals, no matter what plan we come up with, are going to be covered. But just as important as coverage--just as important are the delivery mechanisms and systems which are provided.

I often say to people that as far as health care improvement, I don't think anything has done much more than Medicare, Medicaid, and the development of community health centers and community mental health centers. And so any plan or system that we come up with, I hope that we will expand community health centers, because as

deliverers of primary care, I don't think that there's anything in America that has done a more effective job for low-income people than what these institutions have done.

In addition to that, I would hope that we take a hard look at nursing home care. What happens to people once they begin to reach the "golden" ages? What happens to them as they have given every measure of devotion that they could possibly provide for their country? We need to make sure that they don't languish in some place.

One of the proudest things in my family is the fact that we decided, for example, that neither one of our parents would have to experience that kind of care. My mother was an invalid for about the last 10 or 12 years of her life. But, of course, we decided that she would stay at somebody's house, in somebody's home, and that we could be assured. I think that every senior citizen should have the assurance of knowing that they're going to be cared for.

I don't want us to forget those individuals with disabilities, those individuals who are sometimes shunned aside, who are not perceived as being a part of the mainstream population. And so in order to be effective, health care reform must be quite comprehensive.

I know that our committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, Education, all of these committees are working jointly together to come up with the kind of plan that the President is going to be proud of.

So, again, Representative Fudge, I want to commend and thank you for the opportunity to be here, and I want to thank, again, my classmate who has led the charge, and that's Representative Donna Christensen, who, for so many years, has been the caucus' point person on health care. And we're going to make health care in this country a right so people will understand that it does not have to be a privilege. I thank you all so much.