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**ENGROSSED SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 8006**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2023 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Hasegawa, Cleveland, Billig, Kuderer, Lovelett, Nguyen, Shewmake, Stanford, Valdez, and C. Wilson

TO THE HONORABLE JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR., PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, AND THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES:

We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully represent and petition as follows:

WHEREAS, Universal health care is one of the most important issues in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Article 25 of the universal declaration of human rights ratified by the United Nations declares health care is a human right; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhuman"; and

WHEREAS, Our current health care system is in a downward spiral with costs continuing to skyrocket, medical debt driving many into bankruptcy or life-altering indebtedness, increasing child mortality rates especially in communities with lower incomes, and creating unnecessary suffering in entire families who struggle to maintain health care insurance coverage or recover from the impacts of health care costs up to and including bankruptcy and homelessness; and

WHEREAS, A national universal health care program is the most efficient and cost-effective means of providing access to health care for everyone and eliminating the economic, physical and mental health pain and suffering so many Americans are experiencing due to lack of timely access to health care and/or debt incurred; and

WHEREAS, A single-payer health plan in the state of Washington would replace the state's current multipayer system in which individuals, private businesses, and government entities pay public and private insurers for health care coverage; and

WHEREAS, This health plan would establish a state agency to finance all medically necessary health care with substantial savings compared with the existing multipayer system of public and private insurers; and

WHEREAS, This health plan would reduce financial barriers to access care and the growing number of residents with inadequate coverage. By reducing administrative and other waste, including health insurance company profits and excessive prices for drugs, hospitals, and medical devices, it would save money on health care; and

WHEREAS, Washington businesses and workers will benefit by lowering the cost of health care, removing the burden of unfunded and inadequate coverage, and allowing businesses to compete more effectively on national and international markets. Businesses will also benefit directly by removing the cost of selecting and implementing health insurance programs for their workers, a billion-dollar expenditure for businesses in the state; and

WHEREAS, The current system of fragmented private health insurance is the main obstacle to expanding access to health care because it promotes administrative waste, both in the processing of bills by providers and in the administration of a health insurance system with its many separate health insurance companies, each offering a large variety of separate plans, each plan involving separate pricing schemes; and

WHEREAS, The large number of independent companies and health plans forces each provider to operate an entire back office with billing clerks and other personnel to deal with billing and negotiating prices for services and vastly inflating the cost for providing health care; and

WHEREAS, The failures of the current private health insurance system allow many opportunities to do better. Our health care problems are not inevitable, not the result of technology or "consumers" insatiable greed. They are the result of bad institutions: Private health insurance and for-profit medicine whose financial incentives favor sickness and treatment over prevention and recovery. We have made mistakes in designing our health care system and we are paying for those mistakes. But that means that we can design a better system; and

WHEREAS, Replacing an inefficient, inequitable, and destructive health care finance system with a fair system will promote economic efficiency, better health, and good public policy; and

WHEREAS, Because the failures of our health care system most dramatically harm marginalized communities, creating a system of universal access, free point-of-service care and standardized reimbursements will not only make health care less expensive, it will also make it fairer and more equitable. Instead of being a system that destroys future opportunity for many, it will be a system which empowers communities through their newfound health and independence;

NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that the federal government:

(1) Create a universal health care program to ensure that every resident of Washington state and our country has timely access to health care services without incurring crippling familial debt;

(2) Absent federal government action on the request in subsection (1) of this memorial, partner with the state of Washington to reduce barriers and allow the state to successfully implement a single-payer health system for the people of Washington such as passing HR 6270 (by Rep. Ro Khanna, CA-17) in Congress which will allow states to create their own universal health care programs; or

(3) Absent federal government action on the requests in subsections (1) and (2) of this memorial with the appropriate federal agencies, work to grant Washington state the appropriate waivers to remove the restrictions on the state's ability to create a universal health care system.

BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately transmitted to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the United States, the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of the United States Department of Labor, the federal agencies involved with granting the requested necessary waivers, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, each member of Congress from the State of Washington.