



## Public comment on the 208 Commission report delivered to the Joint Health and Human Services Committee by Colorado Medical Society President-elect, Ben Vernon, MD

I am Ben Vernon and I am president-elect of the Colorado Medical Society. I stand before you representing almost 7,000 Colorado physicians with genuine optimism that our state has become a national leader in the quest for comprehensive health care reform.

The physicians of Colorado are grateful to the 2006 Legislature for their vision in creating the 208 Blue Ribbon Commission that has delivered on its charge of analyzing ways to expand coverage and decrease health care costs. We also thank Governor Bill Ritter for his leadership in embracing the concept of the Commission as an important complement to his own Colorado Promise to fix our broken health care system.

Most of all we applaud each and every commissioner for the time they took from their personal and professional lives to donate to our state and for their hard work that resulted in the detailed report presented to you today. We call on all members of the legislature to honor those hours of sacrifice and those of the hundreds and hundreds of Colorado citizens who attended Blue Ribbon Commission hearings across the state. We ask you to honor them by committing here and now to accelerate the momentum generated by their hard work by having an open and transparent debate on fixing Colorado's broken health care system.

Coloradans deserve real choices. Doctors understand that we do not have all the answers and we are looking forward to everyone participating in the debate. Physicians' main thrust throughout the 208 Commission hearings has been about reforming the system to improve access, improve quality, control costs and to make health care safer.

Over the past two years, physicians of different specialties and practices from around the state have been meeting every six weeks as part of the CMS Physicians' Congress for Health Care Reform. The Congress has developed a set of guiding principles and a set of policy criteria to in effect operationalize those guiding principles. Taken together, this matrix of ideas represents a comprehensive look at what Colorado physicians believe it will take to reform the health care system. It is not just about coverage nor is it just about doctors. It is about what it is going to take to make sure that people in the state in a reformed system not only have coverage and access but get quality, safe, effective, coordinated care.

The matrix does not address health care reform from an ideological perspective. We developed the guiding principles at the heart of our matrix from the bedside up. The matrix is all about finding the best possible system for Colorado regardless of its origin or how it is financed.

The Colorado Medical Society pledges its continued, steadfast support to the legislature as it tackles health care reform. We strongly urge legislators to accelerate the momentum created by the Blue Ribbon Commission. The time is now for a bipartisan, vigorous debate on reforming our broken health care system because the current system is simply not sustainable and time is running out.

Physicians across the state want their patients and the public to participate in this debate whether they are uninsured or have the best insurance in America. We support the process, we applaud the Commissioners and we are looking forward to being part of the solution. Because of two years of concentrated effort we now have a vision of what health care can be for Colorado. The difficult work ahead is to make this vision a reality.

Let's roll!