



New Episode of “Prescriptions for Health Reform” Available At BlueCrossFoundation.org

Reporter Jonathan Cohn assesses the chances for passage of national health care reform this year and diagnoses past efforts to expand insurance coverage

CONTACT:

Susan Ryan-Vollmar
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation
617.246.2404
susan.ryanvollmar@bcbsma.com

JULY 24, 2009 — A new episode of “Prescriptions for Health Reform,” a podcast from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation featuring interviews with leading thinkers on reform issues, is available now at BlueCrossFoundation.org.

Jonathan Cohn, a senior editor for *The New Republic*, former Kaiser Health Fellow, and the author of *Sick: The Untold Story of America’s Health Care Crisis — And the People Who Pay the Price*, talks about how the next person to be hit with catastrophic medical bills could be you. He also comments on unresolved issues, details, and compromises that must be reached before the passage of national health care reform. Finally, he examines how Massachusetts’s health care reform law can serve as a national model.

- **Cohn on who is paying the highest price under our current system:** “Everybody.”
- **Cohn on why past efforts to reform health care nationally have failed:** “I do think it’s a lack of popular will. The problem is not so much that people don’t want to have a universal healthcare system. I think they do. I think most people, if you take a poll, will say, “Gee, no one should have to go without insurance, everybody should be able to pay their medical bills.” On the other hand, this is not something they feel personally, necessarily.”
- **Cohn on Massachusetts health care reform:** “We need to wait a little longer and get a little more information about how good the insurance people have is. That’s always a worry. When we talk about covering everybody, making sure everyone has health insurance, well, that’s a shorthand that actually means three things. It means making sure everybody has health insurance, making sure that it’s at a level they can afford, and

that it provides the protection they need. I'm not yet certain that's the case in Massachusetts, not because I have any reason to doubt that, just because I haven't seen enough of the evidence yet."

A transcript of the podcast interview is available here:

<http://bluecrossfoundation.org/~media/Files/Podcast/Podcast%20Transcripts/090724CohnTranscriptFIN.pdf>

Listen to the podcast here: <http://bluecrossfoundation.org/Multimedia/Podcasts/Prescriptions.aspx>

New episodes of "Prescriptions for Health Reform" are uploaded every two weeks at BlueCrossFoundation.org; they are also available via free subscription from iTunes. Past episodes of "Prescriptions for Health Reform" feature interviews with Shannon Brownlee, author of *Overtreated: Why Too Much Medicine is Making Americans Sicker and Poorer*, Dr. Jerome Groopman, author of *How Doctors Think*, and Melody Petersen, author of *Our Daily Meds*.

-30-

More About The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation

The mission of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation is to expand access to health care. Through grants and policy initiatives, the Foundation works with public and private organizations to broaden health coverage and reduce barriers to care. It focuses on developing measurable and sustainable solutions that benefit uninsured, vulnerable and low-income individuals and families in the Commonwealth, and served as a catalyst for the pioneering Massachusetts health care reform law passed in 2006. The Foundation was founded in 2001 with an initial endowment of \$55 million from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. The Foundation operates separately from the company and is governed by its own 18-member Board of Directors. It is one of the largest private health philanthropies in New England and in 2007 was awarded the Paul Ylvisaker Award for Public Policy Engagement by the Council on Foundations.