

**CHRISTENSEN URGES MANAGED HEALTH CARE EXECUTIVES TO HELP CLOSE DISPARITY GAP**

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 3, 2006*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to enter into the RECORD an article submitted by the Congressional Black Caucus entitled "Christensen Urges Managed Health Care Execs to Help Close Disparity Gap" which addresses the disparities in health care as experienced by minorities in this country.

On April 20, 2006, during the Capitol Summit: Politics in Healthcare event, Congresswoman DONNA CHRISTENSEN, in her role as the chairperson for the Congressional Black Caucus's Health Braintrust, addressed a group of managed health care executives to discuss the challenges facing health care organizations. Congresswoman CHRISTENSEN focused on the disparities in care for all ethnic minorities in this country.

As you will see as you read the submission, there are many challenges to overcome to ensure quality health care for all Americans. Ms. CHRISTENSEN's statements are not all inclusive; they actually touch on the tip of the iceberg. We need to engage in much more dialog to keep this issue in the forefront and to make sure these messages reach not only corporate executives but everyone, particularly those who can directly affect a more positive outcome.

To quote member CHRISTENSEN: "Lack of insurance and the resulting poor health undermines everyone else's health care." I strongly agree that progress can be made through reinforcement of prevention and comprehensive care initiatives. We must all do our part to ensure that "wellness is within the reach of everyone living in this country."

**CHRISTENSEN URGES MANAGED HEALTH CARE EXECUTIVES TO HELP CLOSE DISPARITIES GAP**

(April 20, 2006—Washington, D.C.)—Joining the efforts to reduce disparities in health care should be the business of all businesses big and small, according to Congresswoman DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN, who chairs the Congressional Black Caucus's Health Braintrust. Christensen addressed a gathering of managed health care executives on Thursday afternoon at the Capitol Summit: Politics in Healthcare event where executives examined and discussed the challenges facing healthcare organizations today including persistent disparities in the care that ethnic minorities receive in this country. "Businesses can help to reduce their costs if they launch efforts to reduce and eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities," Christensen said. "When employees receive inadequate or lower quality health care, costs are assumed by companies and businesses in increased rates of absenteeism or being sick at work, which results in lower rates of productivity, as well as in increased health care costs."

Christensen applauded the group for including the issue of health disparities on their agenda. "I am hopeful that your interest and the pressures that you are under regarding the provision of health care and its increasing costs will be the impetus for the change we need not just to heal our minority populations but the entire country," she said. "Industry is coming to realize ahead of policy makers that early detection and management of some chronic and acute condi-

tions may reduce the amount of health care needed and improve quality of life and improve outcomes." Christensen commended some businesses that have "looked at health disparities among your own employees and the costs of care and are beginning to institute programs to improve both their health and your costs."

Christensen said that it should be a matter of conscience that "in the richest, most technologically advanced and supposed humanitarian country in the world . . . there are an estimated 100,000 annual preventable, premature, excess deaths in African Americans." Similar statistics exist in the Hispanic, Native American and Asian and Pacific Islander communities. "For years politicians, community activists, advocates and organizations have been calling for an appropriate response to such devastating but preventable disease, disability and death in communities of color," she said. "We have argued on the humanity of it, on the right and God-fearing thing to do."

Christensen pointed to the role that underinsurance and underinsurance play in the persistence of health disparities and the effect that it has had on the wider community. She pointed to the fact that many communities, including her district of the U.S. Virgin Islands have struggled to determine the fairest way to provide coverage for employees in businesses large and small. "Lack of insurance and (the) resulting poor health undermines everyone else's healthcare," she said, emphasizing that it is only through "prevention and comprehensive care for which providers are adequately compensated that the rising cost of health care will be controlled and reduced." She urged the executives to "use their corporate influence" to ensure that "wellness is within the reach of everyone living in this country."

Other speakers on the Summit's agenda included former Secretary of State Colin Powell, former Senator John Breaux, author Glenn Hubbard and members of the McGlaughlin Group.

(For more information contact Monique C. Watson at 202-226-7973 or Britt Weinstock at 202-226-7974)

**CONGRATULATING THE COMMISSION ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY**

**HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 3, 2006*

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask you and my esteemed colleagues in the House of Representatives to pay tribute to the Commission on Economic Opportunity, located in the City of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, for 40 years of exemplary community service.

Created on November 3, 1966, pursuant to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, CEO was designated by the Luzerne County Board of Commissioners which included Edmund C. Wideman Jr., James Post and William Goss.

The mission of the agency has always been to empower the less fortunate in our community by providing the resources needed to improve the quality of their lives. Over the years, CEO has developed an array of services to assist people. The weatherization program has had great success helping people with older housing stock insulate their homes in order to save money on heating fuel. The Chore program has given older citizens and low-income

individuals the opportunity to repair essential elements of their homes at affordable prices.

CEO came to the aid of senior citizens in the wake of the devastating Flood of 1972 by developing Washington Square Towers, an apartment complex for the elderly. For nearly 20 years, CEO operated a successful senior citizens market that enabled the elderly to save significant sums on basic food items. Today, CEO's Weinberg Food Bank provides staple food items to those who meet income guidelines.

Indeed, over the years, CEO has fostered several community services that eventually became independent entities. These include Legal Services, Rural Health Corporation, Maternal and Family Health Services, Child Development Council, Luzerne County Human Resources Development Department and Head Start.

The original incorporators of CEO included Gottfried Csala, Mrs. Horace Kramer, George Troy, Carlo Paoerio and Raymond Batow.

Today, CEO's board of directors officers include Monsignor Andrew J. McGowan, president; Attorney David Aikens, vice president; John Namey, vice president; Gary F. Lamont, treasurer; and Marie McCormick, secretary.

The board also includes Peter D. Aula, Jollene Bradford, Attorney Joseph Cannody; William Cherkas, Attorney David Glassberg; Judge Hugh F. Mundy, George Nicholson, Michael Pasonick Jr., Rev. Wallace Smith and Estelle Stryjewski. CEO's professional staff operates under the continued leadership of Gene Brady, who was appointed executive director of CEO in 1978.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating CEO on 40 years of remarkable achievements that have touched the lives of tens of thousands of residents in northeastern Pennsylvania.

**CONGRATULATING DEBRA LAS**

**HON. GIL GUTKNECHT**

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 3, 2006*

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ms. Debra Las of Rochester, Minnesota on receiving the 2005 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

This award was established in 1983 by an Act of Congress and is administered for the White House by the National Science Foundation. The award recognizes teachers who are both role models for colleagues and encourage talented individuals to become and remain teachers. Outstanding math and science educators are nominated each year from the United States and four other jurisdictions. Teachers may be nominated by faculty, students, parents or members of the community. After advancing through an intense selection process at both state and national levels, the final winners are announced by the President of the United States.

Ms. Debra Las teaches eighth grade science at John Adams Middle School in Rochester, Minnesota where she utilizes the school's diversity to connect to her students. Viewing diversity as a strength rather than a weakness, Ms. Las believes that both staff and students alike need to spend the time and