

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) tonight released the following statement regarding President Obama's health care speech to a joint session of Congress.

"President Obama made it clear tonight that we must act now to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable, quality health care. The cost of health care has doubled over the last decade and will continue to rise at an unsustainable rate unless we act now to reform our health care system. The rising cost has made health care unaffordable for millions upon millions of Americans and resulted in reduced and insufficient coverage for many others. At the same time, insurance and drug companies have reaped huge profits. This needs to end.

"I firmly believe that a public option will spur greater efficiencies and cost effective practices within the private insurance sector and is the best way to ensure that Americans have reliable, affordable health coverage. A public option would provide all Americans with an affordable, quality health insurance alternative that they can choose if they don't like their employer-provided coverage or if they don't have any other means of obtaining insurance. I appreciate President Obama's support of a public option and will work to ensure that it is included in the final version of the bill.

"Americans are looking for relief from the soaring cost of health care. A public option that promotes competition combined with a series of reforms that, among other things guarantee coverage to all Americans regardless of pre-existing conditions, will help relieve the huge financial burden that health care has placed on the shoulders of Americans.

"The president was eloquent in his remarks and I think he helped unify members of Congress and the nation around one thing on which everyone agrees: we need to improve the health care system in this country. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the president to produce a strong, substantive health care measure that will enable all Americans to have quality, affordable health coverage."