

What's at Stake for Women and the Nation

Health Care Reform without Women of Color

is No Reform at All

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Did you know that a 22 year-old woman can be charged 150% more for health insurance premiums than her 22 year-old male counterpart? On Tuesday, October 20th, the [Women of Color United Coalition](http://www.womenofcolorunited.net) addressed this and other disparities for women and communities of color during a conference call with White House officials.

[Tina Tchen](#), Director of the White House Office of Public Liaison and Executive Director for the White House Council on Women and Girls, and [Caya Lewis](#), Outreach Director for the Health and Human Services Office of Health Reform and Former Health Staffer for Senator Edward Kennedy, spoke about the need to add voices of women of color to health care reform.

One of the standout themes in the conversation was access to preventive care. Caya Lewis pointed out that **women of color are more likely to die from breast cancer than white women in America**—not because they get the disease more often, but because they are not accessing mammograms early enough. This may be attributed to women of color being under- or uninsured, language or cultural barriers, lack of knowledge, or geographic location. Whatever the reason, **expanding access to health care and increasing cultural competency of health care professionals is essential to eliminating this racial gap.**

Another disturbing fact is that under our health care system, women are hit hard by rules concerning pre-existing conditions. **Under many health insurance plans, a C-section can be considered a pre-existing condition!** When you consider that 30-40% of women use this method of delivery, imagine how many women are being denied coverage every year on this basis. And even more shocking is that on many current US insurance plans, **women who have been victims of violence can be denied coverage based on prior “risky” behavioral patterns.** If this sounds like victim-blaming to you, you’re not the only one.

Tchen and Lewis were both realistic about how much work there is still left to be done. But they stressed that the Administration understands the need for health reform and a health care system that works for all, not just a privileged few. Women and communities of color are encouraged to speak up. No health care reform will be complete without the inclusion of these voices.

For more information, visit <http://www.womenofcolorunited.net>.

**Emily is a current NCRW intern, as well as a student at NYU's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. She is pursuing her M.P.A., specializing in policy analysis with an emphasis on women's advocacy.*

LINK: <http://www.ncrw.org/ncrwbigfive/health-care-reform-without-women-of-color-is-no-reform-at-all>