The President
The White House

January 14, 1952

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the American Federation of Labor, I wish to commend you on the appointment of the president’s Commission to conduct a study of the health needs of the nation.

Communist aggression has thrust upon the American people a heavy burden of defense and rearmament. In building up the nation’s defensive strength, health is a foremost factor. The defense effort has made especially urgent the task of providing effective remedies for the grave problem of inadequate health services and facilities.

There is pressing and insistent need for Congressional action which would assure training of more physicians, nurses, dentists, and medical technicians than are now in training. We must prevent the present acute shortage of trained medical personnel from developing into a far-reaching national crisis.

We need prompt Congressional action to help initiate speedy construction of hospitals and health centers in the areas where such facilities are grossly inadequate or completely absent.

We need quick provision of funds to activate without delay the operation of the Emergency Maternal and Infant Care Programs in the centers of defense activity throughout the nation.

The program to strengthen State and local public health units, embodied in S.245 and already passed by the Senate, should be enacted into law without further delay.
These are immediate steps. They constitute an indispensable part of America's preparedness effort. The Commission should be in a position to assemble the main facts bearing upon these current emergency needs and provide firm recommendations for the guidance of the present session of Congress for action.

But, even if such emergency steps are taken, the fundamental problem of the ability of the great majority of American families to gain access to essential medical services will still remain unresolved. This larger task which you have placed before the Commission cannot be long left unattended.

It is labor's hope that, by the end of the current year, the Commission will be in a position to present to the country a strong and vigorous program to bring preventive and remedial medicine within the financial reach of every American family.

It is our view that the best solution to this larger problem is a national health insurance program. We have advocated from the outset and advocate today such a health program, based on ironclad safeguards against invasion by the state of the private relationship between the patient and physician, and of the freedom of choice on the part of both the patient and the doctor.

We support the national health insurance program you have consistently recommended. We regard it as the best constructive alternative to socialized or state-controlled medicine.

We are acutely conscious of the failure of our Congress to take positive action to meet the insistent health needs of the people. In view of this, the broad task with which you have charged the President's Commission remains of far-reaching importance to every American. Its studies and findings will provide evidence long sought and heretofore unavailable to the public.

It is a matter of bitter disappointment to every forward-looking American that the American Medical Association which in the past has conducted a well organized campaign against any affirmative action by the Congress on matters concerning the nation's health, has now refused to cooperate even in the fact-finding study you have authorized.
We feel, as I am sure does the vast majority of the public and of greatly overworked doctors, that despite this obstructionism on the part of American Medical Association leaders, your Commission will help the people to uncover the truth and to point the way toward needed action.

Respectfully yours,

[Signature]

President
American Federation of Labor