

The Federal System and Healthcare Policy

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation

## Week 3 Essay: The Federal System and Healthcare Policy

### **Introduction**

The interplay between the different branches and levels of the United States government in formulating and implementing healthcare policy offers a rich case study for examining the federal system's complexity and dynamism (Martens et al., 2022). This essay delves into the mechanisms through which federal, state, and local governments, along with the legislative, executive, and judicial branches at the federal level, address issues within the American healthcare system. The specific focus is on how these entities collaborate or, at times, work at cross-purposes to shape healthcare policies (Tuckerman et al., 2023). Understanding this interaction is crucial for anyone looking to grasp the nuances of American governance and its impact on public health outcomes. The essay refrains from personal biases, aiming instead to provide a well-reasoned analysis based on current policies and proposed solutions within the healthcare sector.

### **Identifying the Policy Problem**

The American healthcare system faces numerous challenges, but perhaps none is more pressing than the issue of healthcare affordability (LiPuma & Robichaud, 2020). As costs continue to rise, the number of people who can afford necessary care without financial assistance decreases. This policy problem is critical because it affects a significant portion of the population and involves substantial government funding and regulation. The thesis statement of this essay posits that the most effective solution to the problem of healthcare affordability is the expansion of government-subsidized health insurance programs. This solution is preferred because it directly targets the root of the problem—high costs—by making healthcare more accessible and affordable through government intervention.

The justification for focusing on this policy solution over others, such as deregulating the healthcare industry or relying on private health savings accounts, lies in its broad applicability and proven effectiveness in other contexts, such as the expansions seen under the Affordable Care Act (Galvani et al., 2020). By lowering the financial barriers to healthcare, subsidized insurance programs can improve public health outcomes and reduce long-term healthcare costs for the government and private sectors by preventing diseases from progressing to more severe and expensive stages (Berenson & Murray, 2022).

### **Analysis**

Two notable competing solutions to the issue of healthcare affordability are the deregulation of the healthcare industry to stimulate competition and reduce prices and the promotion of private health savings accounts to encourage individual savings for medical expenses. Through legislative actions and executive orders, the federal government can influence both solutions, while state and local governments also have roles, particularly in regulation and implementation (López et al., 2021).

The legislative branch can pass laws to either deregulate aspects of healthcare or establish guidelines for health savings accounts. Through the Department of Health and Human Services, the executive administers national health programs and enforces health law. The judicial branch adjudicates disputes arising from these laws, influencing their implementation and reach.

Each level of government has distinct responsibilities (Galvani et al., 2020). Federal oversight ensures national standards and funding; state governments manage the implementation and can tailor approaches to local needs; local governments often directly provide services and enforce state and federal regulations.

### **Building the Argument**

The expansion of government-subsidized health insurance programs is advocated as the most effective solution to improving healthcare affordability (Crowley et al., 2020). This approach is supported by evidence from multiple studies indicating that increased access to subsidized insurance leads to better health outcomes and reduced healthcare expenditures. Critics of this solution often argue that it could increase government debt or discourage private-sector innovation. However, these arguments are mitigated by evidence showing that preventive care funded through insurance can reduce the need for expensive emergency care and complex interventions, ultimately lowering costs (Crowley et al., 2020).

Furthermore, expanding subsidized programs can stimulate the economy by freeing up individual and family resources for other expenditures besides healthcare. Critics who worry about private sector innovation must consider that government-funded insurance programs can coexist with private innovation, particularly in pharmaceuticals and medical technology, where the U.S. leads globally.

### **Conclusion**

This essay has explored the complex dynamics of the U.S. federal system as it pertains to healthcare policy, particularly focusing on the issue of affordability (Galvani et al., 2020). Through a detailed examination of competing policy solutions and the roles of various government branches and levels, it has been argued that expanding government-subsidized health insurance programs offers the most feasible and effective solution to the problem of healthcare affordability. This analysis demonstrates the importance of a coordinated approach that involves multiple layers of government and respects the checks and balances inherent in the U.S. political system. The key takeaway is that while no policy solution is without drawbacks, the benefits of expanded subsidized health insurance—both in terms of health outcomes and

economic impact—far outweigh the potential negatives. This case study not only sheds light on the workings of the federal system but also underscores the critical role of policy in shaping public health.

## References

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