# Hospitals propose mandatory insurance

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The Federation of American Hospitals in Washington has suggested that all U.S. citizens be required to have basic health insurance.

The federation, which includes many of the country's largest hospital chains, made the proposal to federal lawmakers as a possible method to bring health coverage to the 47 million people without medical insurance in the United States, The New York Times reported Thursday.

The proposal would require employees to take advantage of employer health insurance plans, buy private insurance or receive insurance through existing government programs. The federation also proposes that $115.2 billion be added to the annual $900 billion that federal and state agencies currently spend on healthcare programs.

However, the proposal does not state where the additional funds would come from.

Federation officials said the plan was drawn up in response to the $40 billion in unpaid bills that U.S. hospitals face every year. Many of the unpaid bills are the result of uninsured patients.

"We, in essence, have become the insurers of the uninsured," said Victor Campbell, the federation's chairman and a senior vice president of HCA, the nation's largest hospital chain.

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