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WASHINGTON, D.C., March 10 --- U.S. Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kans.) today joined in cosponsoring the Health Maintenance Organization Act of 1971, a bill the Senator considers "a critical and integral element of the President's programs for Health Partnership."

Speaking from the Senate floor, Dole explained that Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) are organized systems of health care services for a fixed prepaid fee to a voluntarily enrolled population. Dole said the concept "is relatively new to Kansas," as there are no fully developed HMOs in that state, but that it has "great potential." A member of the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Needs, Dole said the MHO concept is "particularly appealing to Kansas because of its focus on the medically underserved areas such as so often found in rural America."

The Kansas Senator indicated he had "certain reservations," because HMOs are not widely established," but added that a number of Kansas health professionals and consumers had expressed their interest in the concept, regarding it as "one possible option for improving and reforming our present health delivery system."

The Health Maintenance Organization Act of 1971 would provide financing for the development and expansion of health maintenance organizations.