American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

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November 2, 2009

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman Emeritus
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Chairman Emeritus:

On behalf of the 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and surgical specialists of the American Academy of Pediatrics who are committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, we write to express our sincere gratitude for your introduction of HR 3962, the "Affordable Health Care for America Act." The Academy supports the legislation.

The bill takes significant steps toward achieving the Academy's highest priorities for health reform. These priorities include coverage for all children in the US, age-appropriate benefits in a medical home, and appropriate payment rates to allow access to covered services. These investments go a long way toward bending the cost curve in a positive manner over the long term.

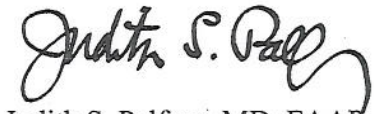
However questions remain regarding the implementation of the policies set forth in the legislation and how they might impact children. We hope to learn more about the impact of the legislation on coverage including how many children are projected to be insured as a result of its enactment, and what the folding of CHIP means for families who enjoy the protections and benefits of that program. Children currently eligible for Medicaid and CHIP should receive comparable access to services in the Exchange, but because it is untested, the Academy is extremely anxious about moving children out of Medicaid and CHIP into private health plans in the Exchange. Children should not be a casualty of compromise in health reform.

Even with these issues, we wish to thank you for some of the most important sections of the legislation that will have a significant impact for children on Medicaid. Section 1721 will increase access to services for the poorest children and is a significant and welcome step forward to start valuing children in the same way that we value adults. We urge you to fight to keep this section whole and note regrettably that the Senate has not shown the wisdom you have in including such a policy in earlier versions of health reform legislation.

We also note that Medicaid coverage for all populations to 150% of the federal poverty level and the continuation of state-defined income disregards will allow many children to continue their entitlement to medically necessary services.

We look forward to standing with you as the legislative process unfolds. We greatly appreciate your consideration of the needs of children and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that the life success of every child is our nation's highest priority.

Sincerely yours,



Judith S. Palfrey, MD, FAAP
President

JSP: rh