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7272 Greenville Avenue • Dallas, Texas 75231-4596
Tel 214.373.6300 • americanheart.org

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November 5, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

The American Heart Association (AHA) has long recognized the need for meaningful, comprehensive health care reform that meets the needs of patients with heart disease and stroke and their families. On behalf of the AHA and its American Stroke Association division, we believe that the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962) is a significant step towards meaningful health care reform. H.R. 3962 addresses the Association's patient-centered principles and priorities for health reform, particularly in the areas of enhancing coverage and emphasizing prevention. Therefore, we support specific provisions in the bill that make health care coverage more accessible, affordable and adequate for the 80 million Americans living with heart disease and stroke.

We are pleased to see that the Congressional Budget Office projects that the bill's provisions would expand health insurance coverage to an additional 36 million people, achieving coverage for 96 percent of all Americans. We are also pleased and supportive of provisions that ensure that patients with pre-existing medical conditions, such as heart disease and stroke, will no longer be denied insurance or dropped from coverage. The bill also addresses the issue of affordability and protects patient and their families from facing medical bankruptcy. In addition, the bill makes great progress in the area of prevention by making a significant new investment in community prevention and requiring Medicare, Medicaid and private health plans to provide first-dollar coverage for evidence-based clinical preventive services. And the bill takes positive steps in the right direction in improving the delivery of health care by putting a greater emphasis on the quality and not just the quantity of care delivered to patients and better coordination of care.

Given the immense breadth and complexity of the issues involved in achieving meaningful health care reform, the American Heart Association recognizes that there are still significant issues and concerns that will need to be reconciled in the final legislation. The AHA firmly believes that it is imperative that the legislative process proceed and the public dialogue continue; therefore we encourage passage of H.R. 3962 with the hope and expectation that these deliberations will progress towards our goal of achieving meaningful health care reform this year.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that the needs of heart disease and stroke patients and the millions more at risk for cardiovascular disease are addressed.

Sincerely,

Neil M. Meltzer, MPH
Chairman of the Board

Clyde W. Yancy, MD, FAHA
President

**"Building healthier lives,
free of cardiovascular
diseases and stroke."**

Please remember the American Heart Association in your will.

