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November 3, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Office of the Speaker
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA), I am writing to affirm our strong support for the *Affordable Health Care for America Act*, HR 3962. ANA commends the work of the House Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Education and Labor committees as this legislation clearly represents a movement toward much-needed, comprehensive and meaningful reform for our nation's healthcare system. America's nurses understand that this reform cannot wait; it must be done today.

The ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 2.9 million registered nurses (RNs) through its 51 constituent member associations. The ANA particularly wants to express our appreciation for the recognition that, in order to meet our nation's health care needs, we must have an integrated and well resourced national healthcare workforce policy, a system that focuses on wellness and prevention, and a high-quality public insurance option that complements and competes fairly with options offered by private insurers.

ANA remains committed to the principle that health care is a basic human right and that all persons are entitled to ready access to affordable, quality health care services. ANA supports a restructured health care system that ensures universal access to a standard package of essential health care services for all individuals and families – as is illustrated in the *Affordable Health Care for America Act*. That is why ANA strongly supports the inclusion of a public health insurance plan option as an essential part of comprehensive health care reform in H.R. 3962.

ANA believes that inclusion of this public health insurance plan option would assure that patient choice is a reality and not an empty promise, and that a high-quality public health insurance plan option will above all, provide the access to prevention and early intervention that is missing from our current health care environment. ANA deeply appreciates the commitment to a public health insurance plan in H.R. 3962, and we look forward to partnering with you to make this plan a reality.

As the largest single group of clinical health care professionals within the health system, licensed registered nurses are educated to practice within a holistic framework that views the individual, family and community as an interconnected system that can keep us well and help us heal. Registered nurses are fundamental to the critical shift needed in health services delivery, with the goal of transforming the current "sick care" system into a *true* "health care" system.

Advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), in particular nurse practitioners and certified nurse midwives, are proven providers of high-quality, cost effective primary care. ANA has

been advocating for the use of provider neutral language and believes that any type of demonstration or pilot project that focuses on primary care should include nurse practitioners and certified nurse midwives and that nothing should preclude them from leading those models of care. The *Affordable Health Care for America Act* clearly recognizes that support, development and deployment of this keystone profession is essential for any quality health reform plan to succeed.

ANA deeply appreciates the recognition of the need to expand the nursing workforce, and thanks you for your commitment to amend the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs under the Public Health Service Act. We also are grateful for the financial commitment to the Title VIII programs made in H.R. 3962. The funding stream created through the Public Health Investment Fund and the dollars committed through 2015 would offer vital resources and much needed funding stability for these important programs. We are pleased to see so many important provisions included in the bill that will help address the growing nursing shortage. We also appreciate the inclusion of the definition of the Nurse Managed Health Centers under the Title VIII definitions.

In addition, ANA applauds the use of "community-based multidisciplinary teams" to support primary care through various demonstrations and pilot programs. These models demonstrate a commitment to quality, coordinated care by all health providers, and represents a focus, not just on treating illness, but on emphasizing wellness and prevention. ANA is especially pleased that nurse practitioners have been recognized as primary care providers and authorized to lead various models of care, including the Medical Home and Independence at Home pilot programs. APRNs' skills and education, emphasizing patient and family-centered, whole-person care, makes them particularly well-suited providers to lead these models. ANA commends the many measures in the H.R. 3962 that would bolster the nursing profession, and for its demonstrated commitment to fostering full integration, coordination, and collaboration at all levels among our nation's health care workforce.

Once again, the need for fundamental reform of the U.S. health care system is critical. Bold action is called for to create a health care system that is responsive to the needs of consumers and provides equal access to safe, high-quality care for all in a cost-effective manner. ANA and nurses around the country are ready to work with you to advance and enact into law H.R. 3962, the *Affordable Health Care for America Act* this year.

Sincerely,



Rebecca M. Patton MSN, RN, CNOR
President
American Nurses Association

CC: The Honorable George Miller
The Honorable Charles Rangel
The Honorable Henry Waxman