



American
Public Health
Association

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Protect, Prevent, Live Well

November 4, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
House Committee on Education and Labor
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Chairmen Waxman, Rangel and Miller:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association (APHA), the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals and advocates in the world dedicated to promoting and protecting the health of the public and our communities, I write in support of H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act.

Earlier this year, APHA released its 2009 Agenda for Health Reform which outlines APHA's top priorities for health reform legislation. We are very pleased that H.R. 3962 addresses many of the critical changes we believe are needed to improve the public's health and specifically, to start moving from a system that focuses on treating the sick to one that focuses on keeping people healthy. In particular, we are pleased that your legislation would:

- Expand health insurance coverage to include 96 percent of all Americans, bar insurance companies from discriminating against people based on pre-existing medical conditions and limit premium age rating for older Americans to a ratio of 2:1
- Create a mandatory funding stream of \$34 billion for a Prevention and Wellness Trust Fund (including a Public Health Investment Fund of \$15.4 billion over the next five years) to fund such things as community-based prevention and to strengthen core public health activities at the state and local level
- Create a "public option" insurance program that will be administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a competitive option to private insurance
- Provide affordability credits to assist with premiums for individuals and families earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) as well as a cap on total out-of-pocket spending for covered benefits

- Expand the Medicaid program to cover individuals up to 150 percent of FPL, about \$33,075 for a family of four – providing substantial federal funding to pay for the coverage
- Require Medicare, Medicaid and private insurers to provide first dollar coverage for highly rated, evidence-based preventive health services
- Collect data on the health and health care of populations that have traditionally experienced health disparities and prioritize reducing health disparities in the prevention and wellness strategy and community services grants
- Expand and strengthen scholarship, loan repayment, and training grant programs to address the need for primary care, nursing, and public health professionals
- Reauthorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act

The passage of comprehensive and affordable health reform legislation with a strong focus on public health and prevention is APHA's top priority this year. We believe passage of this critical legislation is an important step toward achieving that goal and improving the health and health status of all Americans. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues to enact real health reform legislation this year.

Sincerely,



Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (E)
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Steny Hoyer