



hiv medicine association

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Andrea L. Weddle

November 5, 2009

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA), we are pleased to offer our support for passage of the "Affordable Health Care for America Act" (H.R. 3962) which will expand access to quality, lifesaving care for our patients with HIV and strengthen national capacity to prevent the spread of this deadly disease.

HIVMA represents more than 3,600 physicians, scientists and other health care professionals that work on the frontlines of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in communities across the country. We applaud your tireless leadership, hard work and commitment to enact meaningful health care reform this year. We especially support key elements of the bill that are important to improving access to lifesaving care for people living with HIV/AIDS. As this historic legislation moves forward, we urge you to protect and preserve these components, in particular:

Affordability: In the absence of reasonable limits on premiums, deductibles and cost sharing, medically necessary care and treatment will remain out of reach for many people living with HIV. We strongly urge you to maintain the bill's premium and cost-sharing credits for individuals and families to 400% FPL and to retain the levels of assistance that limit annual out-of-pocket exposure according to income.

National Public Plan Option: A national public plan option is critical to offer real choice, affordability, stability and security to people living with HIV regardless of where they live in the country. In addition to the cost savings realized by a national public plan, the option is important to protect people with HIV from the discriminatory practices that private insurers will likely use to discourage enrollment of people with high cost, chronic conditions. These practices have continued even in a well-regulated market, such as Medicare Part D.

Access to HIV Medical Providers: Studies document that experienced HIV clinicians deliver higher quality care and more cost effective care. We urge you to retain the bill's provision that strengthens access to HIV providers by requiring exchange-eligible plans to contract with Ryan White-funded providers and other safety-net programs (essential community providers as defined in section 340B(a)(4) of the Public Health Service Act). In the past, insurers have discouraged people with HIV from enrolling in their plans by excluding HIV medical providers from their networks and this provision would help end this practice and better ensure access to qualified HIV providers.

Strengthened Medicaid: We support expansion of Medicaid to all low income individuals up to 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and the provision temporarily granting states the authority to expand Medicaid eligibility to include low-income people with HIV regardless of disability status prior to the broader expansion in 2013.

The provision to increase Medicaid primary care reimbursement levels up to Medicare levels is critical to ensure Medicaid beneficiaries have access to qualified health care providers. We strongly urge you to retain this policy and to ensure that the increase is supported with federal funds.

Healthcare Workforce: The HIV health care workforce faces a serious shortage of qualified HIV providers that is driven by many of the same factors contributing to challenges facing the primary care workforce. We strongly support the health workforce development components of the bill, particularly the expansion of national loan repayment programs; capacity building grants to primary care and dentistry programs that target vulnerable populations; and reauthorization and expansion of programs to improve workforce diversity.

Medical Homes: HIV physicians have been leaders in developing medical homes for their patients and have seen firsthand the benefit of providing well-coordinated, comprehensive care. We urge you to retain all of the proposed medical home provisions that would support the delivery of coordinated, comprehensive care throughout the health care system, including under the Medicaid program, the Medicare program and through private plans.

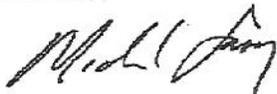
Medicare: Fully closing the Medicare Part D coverage gap is critical to ensuring access to prescription drugs for our Medicare patients. During the phase-in period, we strongly urge you to maintain the provision that allows contributions paid by state AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs) to count toward the Medicare Part D coverage gap or true out-of-pocket cost limit (TrOOP). We also strongly support the proposed 5% increase for Medicare payments for outpatient and inpatient evaluation and management services provided by primary care physicians (10% in rural areas) and support parallel efforts to replace the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) physician payment formula with a mechanism that accounts for annual practice cost increases.

Prevention and Public Health: The provisions that invest in preventive care, research, and infrastructure and workforce development, including the establishment of a Prevention and Wellness Trust funded with dedicated, mandatory funding, are critical to strengthening our public health infrastructure and reorienting our health system towards prevention and preparedness. Stabilizing our public health system and expanding the delivery of HIV prevention programs are essential to reducing the number of new infections and related health care expenses. We also support the Healthy Teen Initiative which would provide grants to reduce teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Health Disparities: We urge you to maintain the provisions addressing health care disparities that are integrated throughout sections of H.R. 3962, including establishing standards for data collection and analysis that require data collection on health disparities by characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identify, and primary language.

HIVMA is committed to working with you and other members of Congress to pass health care reform legislation this year that will improve access to affordable, high quality, comprehensive care. Our patients deserve no less. Please contact us through Andrea Weddle, Executive Director at aweddle@hivma.org or by phone at 703-299-0915.

Sincerely,



Michael S. Saag, MD
Chair, HIVMA Board of Directors

cc: The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The Honorable Henry Waxman
The Honorable Charles Rangel
The Honorable John Dingell

The Honorable George Miller
The Honorable Frank Pallone
The Honorable Pete Stark
The Honorable Robert Andrews