



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
Community Health Centers

October 30, 2009

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

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the more than 1,200 community health centers nationwide and the 20 million people they serve, I write you today to express our heartfelt appreciation for your leadership in shepherding landmark legislation, the "Affordable Health Care for America Act of 2009," to this special moment in history. With the introduction of H.R. 3962, our country is closer than ever before to achieving the most significant health reform advances since the enactment of Medicare in 1965. I want to commend your leadership and that of other key Members who worked tirelessly with you on this history-making collaboration, in particular House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman, Ways and Means Committee Chair Charles Rangel, and Education and Labor Committee Chair George Miller.

Community Health Centers strongly share your goal of achieving universal coverage that is available and affordable to everyone, and especially to low-income individuals and families. H.R. 3962 emphasizes cost-effective preventive and primary health care, begins to address long needed payment reform, and moves our health care system in the right direction – toward quality-focused health care for all. We whole-heartedly appreciate your dedication to bringing the bill to this juncture and pledge our collective efforts to support the final passage and signing of this legislation into law.

We are especially supportive of the bill's expanded Medicaid coverage to all individuals and families with incomes below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, which will extend vital Medicaid benefits and cost-sharing protections to some 15 million poor and low-income uninsured Americans. Medicaid is, by design, specifically focused on meeting the health care needs of this population, making it central to the success of health reform.

We also appreciate the vital subsidies that H. R. 3962 will provide to lower-income individuals and families who are above the Medicaid eligibility level, not only to make coverage affordable but also to eliminate barriers to care as well, through cost-sharing protections – and in particular by eliminating cost-sharing for vital preventive care.

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We are also particularly thankful and supportive of the additional provisions that will dramatically improve access to affordable, accessible, continuous care for low-income and underserved Americans, including:

- An investment in Community Health Centers that anticipates the need for increased access to health care as millions of Americans gain health insurance coverage. This legislation directs \$12 billion in new, dedicated funding to grow the Health Centers program over the next 5 years, allowing Community Health Centers to expand their primary health care capacity dramatically – to serve up to 12 million new patients by the time the expanded insurance coverage goes into effect in 2013, and up to 20 million new patients by 2015.
- Investments in health workforce training, including an additional \$1.8 billion in funding for scholarship and loan repayment assistance to primary care clinicians who agree to serve in provider-short communities, along with increased support for vital public health and prevention activities.

These key elements will ensure that all Americans will benefit from both expanded health coverage and increased access to health care. Community Health Centers stand ready to continue building on the resources made available by Congress earlier this year to strengthen and expand our proven health center system of care, providing preventive and comprehensive primary health care for all. We look forward to working with you as the legislative process continues to ensure the best provisions of the House and Senate proposals are enacted into law.

Once again, Madam Speaker, on behalf of Community Health Centers and the communities we serve, we thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,



Tom Van Coverden  
President and CEO

cc: The Honorable Steny Hoyer, House Majority Leader  
The Honorable Jim Clyburn, House Majority Whip  
The Honorable Henry Waxman, Chairman, House Energy & Commerce Committee  
The Honorable Charles Rangel, Chairman, House Ways & Means Committee  
The Honorable George Miller, Chairman, House Education & Labor Committee