

May 6, 2009

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
Chairman
Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate HELP Committee
835 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

As you and your colleagues continue to work on health reform legislation, the undersigned coalitions, groups, and organizations urge you to ensure the legislation addresses health inequities and makes certain that health and health care disparities reduction and elimination is prioritized. We envision health reform legislation that ensures equity and accountability, and provides individuals with the ability to access comprehensive and culturally and linguistically appropriate health care and public health services and achieve health outcomes consistent with the rest of the population.

Striking disparities in health status exist among various communities and populations throughout the United States, which include shorter life expectancy and higher rates of chronic health conditions and disability. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), disparities are also observed in most aspects of disease prevention and treatment, including care for mental health disorders and substance use, HIV/AIDS, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, oral health conditions, maternal and child health, respiratory disease, and end stage renal disease.

Health reform legislation provides a unique opportunity for addressing critical disparities and achieving many of the health equity recommendations from the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) *Unequal Treatment* report and *Healthy People 2010*. These recommendations will reduce health disparities not only along lines of race and ethnicity, but also along lines of gender and geography and among other populations affected by health inequities.

Comprehensive health reform is essential to improving the health of populations and communities that have traditionally suffered health disparities and barriers to health care and public health services. We urge your support for including health equity provisions in health reform legislation.

We would like to thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request and offer our assistance in addressing this critical issue. Please contact Daniel E. Dawes, J.D., at (202) 682-5110 or ddawes@apa.org, if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

AARP
Adventist HealthCare
Advocates for Youth
Aetna
AIDS Action Baltimore
AIDS Action Council
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
AIDS Project Los Angeles
AIDS Treatment Data Network
AIDS/HIV Health Alternatives
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of HIV Medicine
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Cancer Society Action Network
American College Health Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Dental Education Association (ADEA)
American Diabetes Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Heart Association
American Hospital Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Social Health Association
American Stroke Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Asian American Justice Center
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved
Autism Society of America
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Broward House
Campaign for Mental Health Reform
CANN - Community Access National Network
Center for Advancing Health
Center for Disability Issues and the Health Professions at Western University of Health Sciences
Center for School Mental Health - University of Maryland
Central City Health Corporation
CHADD – Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Dental Health Project
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition on Human Needs

Colorado AIDS Project
Colorado Progressive Coalition
Community Catalyst
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)
Competech Smartcard Solutions (New Jersey)
Council of Accredited MPH Programs
Council on Social Work Education
Denver Area Youth Services (DAYS)
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
External Partners Group for the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities
F.O.U.N.D.
Families USA
First Focus
Hispanic Federation
HIV Medicine Association
HIVictorious, Inc
Housing Works
Human Rights Campaign
Idaho Community Action Network
International Women's Health Coalition
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)
Latino Agenda for Healthcare Reform
Latino Federation of Greater Washington
Latinos for National Health Insurance
League of United Latin American Citizens
Medicare Rights Center
Mental Health America
Montanans for Health Care
Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
NAMI
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of People With AIDS
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN)
National Center for Children in Poverty
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Coalition of Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations
National Committee for Quality Assurance
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

National Council of Jewish Women
National Forum for Latino Healthcare Executives
National Foundation for Mental Health
National Health IT Collaborative for the Underserved
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
National Minority AIDS Council
National Puerto Rican Coalition
National Urban League
National Women and AIDS Collective
Northern Colorado AIDS Project
Oregon Action
Ortho
Out of Many, One Coalition
Pan Pacific Consulting
Papa Ola Lokahi (Native Hawaiian Health Board)
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Psychiatry Section of the National Medical Association
School Social Work Association of America
Society for Public Health Education
South Dakotans for Health Care Solutions
STOP AIDS Project
Strategic Health Resources
Student National Dental Association
Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Inc.
The Carter Center Mental Health Program
The Disparities Solutions Center at Institute for Health Policy Massachusetts General Hospital
The Institute for Family Health
The National Partnership for Women & Families
The National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health at Georgetown University
The National Women's Law Center
Tourette Syndrome Association
Treatment Access Expansion Project
Virginia Organizing Project
Western Pacific Med/Corp
Westside HIV Community Center

CC: President of the United States Barack Obama
House Energy and Commerce Committee
House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Health
House Ways and Means Committee
House Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Health
House Education and Labor Committee
Senate Finance Committee
Senate Indian Affairs Committee

Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus
Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust
Congressional Hispanic Caucus
The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
The Honorable Christopher Dodd
The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski