



Protect, Prevent, Live Well

July 15, 2009

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 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 strong support of H.R. 3200, the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009.

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. 3200 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:

- Develop a national prevention and wellness strategy that would set specific measurable goals and objectives for improving the health of the U.S. through federally-supported prevention, health promotion, and public health programs.
- Expand the work and coordination of the Community Preventive Services Task Force and the U.S. Preventive Services Taskforce to improve effective community-based and clinical prevention services and to improve dissemination of recommendations about effective interventions to public health departments, practitioners, policymakers, health systems and others.
- Require Medicare, Medicaid and private insurers to provide first dollar coverage for highly rated, evidence-based preventive health services.

- Establish a Public Health Investment Fund that strengthens the investment in community health centers, the public health workforce, and also funds a Prevention and Wellness Trust to fund community-based prevention and wellness services, core public health infrastructure and activities at the state and local levels, and core public health infrastructure and activities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Require an annual report containing a description of national, regional, or state changes in health or health care, as reflected by a set of key health indicators developed by the newly created Assistant Secretary for Health Information.
- 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.
- Improve data collection on health workforce needs and increase the supply, distribution, diversity and cultural competence of the public health and primary care workforce, including establishing and supporting the training of a Public Health Workforce Corps, supporting graduate medical education in preventive medicine and primary care, expanding the National Health Service Corps, and increasing funding for health professions diversity programs.
- Create a new public insurance option that provides consumers with a competitive alternative to private insurance coverage offered through the Health Insurance Exchange.

Additionally, while not included in H.R. 3200, we strongly urge you to continue efforts to work with the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Management and Budget to develop a methodology that scores the long term savings accruing to medical and other sectors as a result of effective prevention programs and services.

We thank you again for including strong public health provisions in this critical legislation and look forward to working with you and your colleagues on your committees as you move forward with health reform legislation this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

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

Cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi