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*Protect, Prevent, Live Well*

October 5, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman  
Senate Finance Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Senate Finance Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Senate Health, Education  
Labor & Pensions Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Enzi  
Ranking Member  
Senate Health, Education  
Labor & Pensions Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators:

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 passing comprehensive and affordable health reform legislation this year.

As you move forward with combining the two bills considered by the Senate Finance and Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committees, **APHA urges you to include the following provisions in the final bill considered by the full Senate:**

- The “public option” provision included in Senate HELP Committee bill. Unfortunately, the bill passed by the Senate Finance Committee contains no such provision. We believe a public option is essential to providing consumers with a competitive and affordable alternative to private insurance.
- Full funding for the Prevention and Public Health Investment Fund included in the Senate HELP Committee bill. The fund would strengthen our public health infrastructure and shift the current health system from a focus on treating illness, to one that prevents illness.
- Cap premiums and cost sharing for insurance sold in the exchange to no more than 10 percent of income for those earning up to 400 percent of the poverty level, and less for people with more limited incomes. The Finance and HELP bills cap premiums at 12 percent and 12.5 percent respectively, and peg additional out-of-pocket costs allowed to a percentage of the HSA, topping out at \$11,600 for a family. These costs could easily bankrupt a family facing a serious illness, consuming as much as 25 percent of its pre-tax income.

- The HELP Committee age rating of insurance premiums of 2:1. The Finance Committee's age rating is too high at 4:1 and could make health insurance unaffordable for Americans age 50-65 who currently lack health insurance.
- The HELP Committee actuarial value of health plans for those at or below 400% of FPL. The actuarial values of plans in the HELP bill are significantly higher than those included in the bill passed by the Finance Committee.
- The HELP Committee public health workforce provisions creating a public health workforce loan repayment program, mid-career public health professional training program, youth program, and establishes a U.S. Public Health Sciences Track.
- The HELP Committee public health and primary care workforce nursing and dentistry provisions including advanced nursing education grants, nursing faculty loan repayment programs, dental training programs, and dental programs for rural and underserved communities.

We thank you for your ongoing work on legislation to reform the nation's health system and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the final bill considered by the Senate improves the health of the American people and takes us closer to providing comprehensive and affordable health coverage for all.

Sincerely,

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

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

Cc: The Honorable Barack Obama  
The Honorable Chris Dodd