



American
Public Health
Association

800 I Street, N.W. • Washington, DC 20001-3710
Phone: (202) 777-APHA • Fax: (202) 777-2534
www.apha.org • comments@apha.org

Protect, Prevent, Live Well

November 20, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid, Harkin and Baucus:

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 support of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. We commend you and your colleagues for your efforts to craft a comprehensive health reform bill that prioritizes public health and prevention.

Earlier this year, APHA released its 2009 Agenda for Health Reform which outlines APHA's top priorities for health reform legislation. We are pleased that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act addresses many of the 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:

- Expand health insurance coverage to millions of uninsured Americans and would bar insurance companies from discriminating against people based on pre-existing medical conditions
- Create a dedicated funding stream for prevention, wellness and public health activities authorized by the Public Health Service Act
- Create a "Community Health Insurance Option" that will be administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a competitive option to private insurance
- Create an interagency council to develop a national prevention and health promotion strategy with the goal of promoting healthy policies at the federal level
- Provide affordability credits to assist with premiums for individuals and families earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) as well as a cap on total out-of-pocket spending for covered benefits
- Expand Medicaid eligibility to millions of low-income individuals

- Require Medicare and private insurers to provide first dollar coverage for highly rated, evidence-based preventive health services
- Expand the work and coordination of the Community Preventive Services Task Force and the Preventive Services Task Force 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 federal health programs to collect and report data, for analysis, on race, ethnicity, primary language and any other indicator of disparity

Thank you for your ongoing work and leadership to reform the nation's health system. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the final bill sent to the president contains the strongest possible public health and prevention provisions to improve the health of the American people and moves us closer to providing comprehensive and affordable health coverage for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

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

Cc: The Honorable Chris Dodd