



American Optometric Association

1505 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 • (703) 739-9200
FAX: (703) 739-9497

June 17, 2008

The Honorable Nydia Velazquez
Chairwoman
House Small Business Committee
US House of Representatives
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Velazquez,

On behalf of the American Optometric Association (AOA), the voice of more than 34,000 doctors of optometry who serve as America's frontline providers of eye and vision care, I would like to offer the AOA's endorsement of the Small Business Cooperative for Healthcare Options to Improve Coverage for Employees Act (CHOICE).

AOA is extremely appreciative for the leadership you have shown and the attention that you have given to the concerns of small business health care providers and the challenges they face in managing a small health care practice/business. In addition to the complexities of running a business faced with low payments from federal health care programs, administrative burdens by private insurers and the increasing strain on providers by the ongoing transformation of the current health care system, optometrists provide access to quality care and ensure that their employees' health care is also appropriately covered.

The Small Business "CHOICE" Act will provide relief for small business optometry practices who have been doing the right thing for years and facing fiscal decisions due to double digit premium increases that may jeopardize the health coverage of their valued employees. This legislation would help optometrists offer their employees affordable, comprehensive health insurance by lowering the cost of health insurance premiums.

The American Optometric Association would like to thank you, your colleagues on the Small Business Committee, and your diligent staff for the thoughtful development of the Small Business "CHOICE" Act. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the Committee to usher in further needed reforms to ensure that the current health care system becomes more equitable for small health care providers and more accurately reflects their true value in the delivery of America's health care.

Sincerely,

Michele R. Haranin, O.D.

Michele Haranin, OD
Chair, AOA Federal Relations Committee