



July 15, 2009

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chair, Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chair, Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Chair, Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Waxman, Chairman Rangel, and Chairman Miller –

On behalf of the more than 1,200 health centers across the country, our more than 100,000 staff and board members, and our more than 18 million patients, I write today to express our profound gratitude and our strong support for the “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009”.

In Community Health Centers across the country, we witness the urgent need for fundamental health reform every single day, in the faces and struggles of our patients who for too long have been left behind by our current dysfunctional health care system. Your legislation would not only extend meaningful health coverage to most of the 46 million Americans who are currently uninsured, but would make the investments necessary to bring community-based primary and preventive care to every individual and community in America.

In particular, we commend the investment your legislation would make in the continued expansion of health centers through the Public Health Investment Fund. These resources will bring new health centers to needy communities currently without them, will expand capacity and stabilize existing centers, and will ensure the full range of medical, dental, mental health and pharmacy services is available to every health center patient. The health center model of care has been proven, time and again, to save our health system money and keep patients healthy, and this investment builds on that record of success.

Beyond the infrastructure investments in the legislation, we are particularly supportive of:

- The expansion of **Medicaid** to cover all individuals up to 133% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This will ensure that millions more low-income Americans will be covered for the comprehensive benefits they need, while at the same time ensuring health centers are able to receive appropriate, predictable reimbursement, for the care they provide.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
Community Health Centers

- The improvements in training, payment and incentive programs all designed to strengthen the **primary care workforce and primary care services**, a necessary step toward ensuring meaningful access to care.
- The requirement that exchange plans contract with “**Essential Community Providers**”, including Health Centers and other safety-net providers, which will assure access to care for the residents of underserved areas who gain coverage through Exchange plans.

Our 43 years of experience in caring for America’s medically disenfranchised has taught us three things: that health reform must achieve universal coverage that is **available** and **affordable** for everyone, and especially to low-income individuals and families; that such coverage must be **comprehensive**, with emphasis on **prevention and primary care**; and that it must guarantee everyone access to a **medical or health care home**, where they can receive **high quality, cost effective care** for their health needs.

Your legislation meets those goals, and represents a strong blueprint for an American health care system that expands access, improves quality, and controls costs. We wholeheartedly support the bill and look forward to working with you to ensure its successful consideration and passage.

Sincerely,

Dan Hawkins

Senior Vice-President, Public Policy and Research