



J. James Rohack, MD, President

March 19, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

After careful review and consideration, the Board of Trustees of the American Medical Association (AMA) supports passage of the health system reform legislation under consideration in the House as a step forward in the journey to provide health care coverage for all Americans.

When H.R. 3590 was being considered in the Senate, the AMA supported its passage while expressing opposition to certain provisions that we believed could be resolved in the conference committee process. Working with the Administration, congressional leaders and their very dedicated staff, significant progress was made toward resolving many of our most serious concerns. Unfortunately, there are issues in H.R. 3590 that cannot be addressed through the current reconciliation process and so will still need to be addressed by Congress and the Administration.

This forced us to weigh very carefully whether the legislation, on balance, will enhance patient care and the fundamental patient-physician relationship. By extending coverage to the vast majority of the uninsured, improving competition and choice in the insurance marketplace, promoting prevention and wellness, reducing administrative burdens, and promoting clinical comparative effectiveness research, we believe that H.R. 3590 does, in fact, improve the ability of patients and their physicians to achieve better health outcomes.

The pending bill is an imperfect product. Congress needs to act very soon to preserve access to care for seniors and military families by permanently repealing the Medicare sustainable growth rate formula that will trigger physician payment cuts of over 21 percent next month. House and Senate leaders must also move immediately to correct problems with the proposed Independent Payment Advisory Board. Other provisions that must be promptly addressed in a subsequent corrections bill include the cost-quality value index and safeguards for data release and public reporting activities. The health care system will be further improved by reining in unnecessary costs through enactment of effective medical liability reforms.

The AMA will be relentless in our pursuit of these important policy adjustments.

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Passage of H.R. 3590 marks an important step toward improving the health of the American people, but our work here is far from done. Additional congressional action is needed to address outstanding issues. We look forward to working with you on the next steps to strengthen our health care system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Rohack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" written in a large, stylized loop.

J. James Rohack, MD

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives