

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 23, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer  
House Democratic Majority Leader  
H-107, The Capitol  
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chair of Steering and Outreach Committee  
133 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James E. Clyburn  
House Majority Whip  
H-329, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John B. Larson  
Chairman  
House Democratic Caucus  
202A Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harkin  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate HELP Committee  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Vice Chair  
House Democratic Caucus  
1119 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, Majority Whip Clyburn, Chairman Larson, Vice Chairman Becerra, Majority Leader Reid, Chairwoman Stabenow, and Chairmen Baucus and Harkin,

Thank you for your leadership in the health care reform debate. Like you, the President, and every other American, we seek reforms in health care that will contain costs in a system that has become increasingly unaffordable, especially for working class families. However, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus recently proposed to exclude undocumented immigrants from purchasing health coverage through the insurance "exchange." This proposal runs counter to some of the core components of health care reform: containing health care costs, increasing the use of preventive care services, and streamlining the health delivery system. We write to urge you to oppose this proposal.

Health care reform has been structured around the idea that the U.S. needs more people, especially young and healthy individuals, to buy insurance and pay into the health care system to make health care affordable for all. For this reason, the proposals introduced by the Administration and both houses of Congress seek to institute an individual mandate for purchasing coverage and investments in prevention, counting on the participation of millions more healthy individuals to help drive down the

cost of health care. The cost of providing the uninsured with expensive emergency room care has been frequently cited by many in the health reform debate as a key contributor to skyrocketing premiums.

As such, it is not rational to exclude individuals who are willing and able to share in the responsibility of paying into the system. As immigrants tend to come to the U.S. during prime working years, they tend to be younger and healthier. Immigrants have been shown to seek substantially less medical care even while carrying insurance than native born Americans. In fact, immigrants spend 55 percent less on health care than U.S. born individuals. Thus, immigrants' contribution to the health care system would buoy the affordability of health care for everyone else in this nation. Chairman Baucus's proposal to prevent undocumented immigrants from purchasing unsubsidized coverage will only add to uncompensated care costs and costly emergency room visits. Costs due to such visits will be shifted and distributed among all those who have been mandated to carry insurance. With skyrocketing health care costs, legislators should do all that we can to contain costs for working American families.

Congress and the Administration have also recognized that prevention is a key element of reform. Investing in preventive care is cost-effective and results in better health outcomes and long-term cost-savings. Yet, the success of a prevention framework is critically dependent upon access to health coverage. Continuing to allow undocumented immigrants to purchase unsubsidized, private health insurance coverage will contribute to the goal of replacing emergency care with the increased use of much cheaper preventive care.


There are also public health implications when a large portion of the U.S. population has severely limited access to health care coverage. It is good public health policy for everyone residing in our country to have access to health care coverage. Disease and illnesses do not discriminate based on immigration status, and neither should America's health care policy. The threat of pandemics and other infectious diseases demonstrate particularly well the folly of politicized public health policy. For example, the rapid spread of H1N1 flu should make policymakers cognizant of and guarded about the public health implications of effectively denying access to health care coverage to a large portion of the population.

Finally, Senator Baucus's proposal would require the implementation of a costly immigration status verification requirement. As we learned from implementing Medicaid documentation requirements under the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, such verification requirements are cumbersome, ineffective, expensive, and create administrative barriers that prevent citizens from getting the health care they need. In 2007, the Government Accountability Office found that the documentation requirement resulted in enrollment declines for eligible citizens and posed administrative burdens (GAO-07-889). Twenty-two of forty-four states reported declines in Medicaid enrollment due to the requirement, and a majority of these states attributed the declines to delays in or losses of Medicaid coverage for individuals who appeared to be eligible citizens. Thus, even if undocumented persons are barred from purchasing health insurance in the exchange, we urge you to refrain from imposing documentation requirements that will prevent citizens and other eligible individuals from obtaining health care coverage.

The proposal to prohibit undocumented immigrants from buying unsubsidized health care coverage is ill advised and we hope that you will not let the health care reform debate slip away from the goals it seeks to achieve.

We appreciate your openness during this process and look forward to continuing our work together to ensure that Congress passes strong health care reform legislation that includes all measures possible to reduce health care costs for American families.

Sincerely,



**MIKE HONDA**

Chair  
Congressional Asian Pacific  
American Caucus



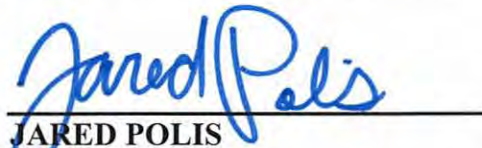
**LYNN WOOLSEY**

Co-Chair  
Congressional Progressive Caucus



**RAUL GRIJALVA**

Co-Chair  
Congressional Progressive Caucus



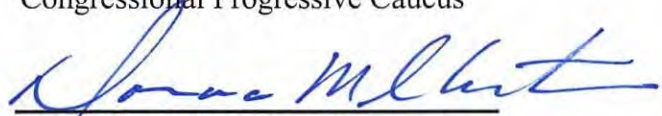
**JARED POLIS**

Chair  
Immigration Task Force  
Congressional Progressive Caucus



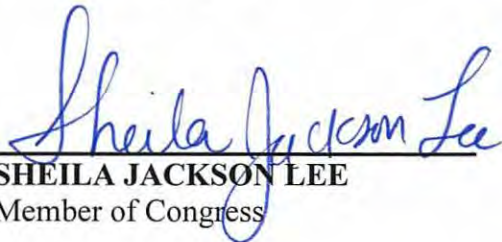
**BARBARA LEE**

Member of Congress



**DONNA CHRISTENSEN**

Member of Congress



**SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

Member of Congress



**JOHN CONYERS**

Member of Congress



**JERROLD NADLER**

Member of Congress



**KEITH ELLISON**

Member of Congress



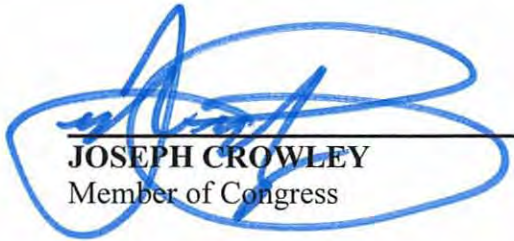
**LUIS GUTIERREZ**

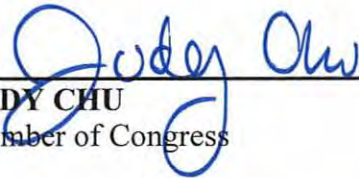
Member of Congress



**LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD**

Member of Congress

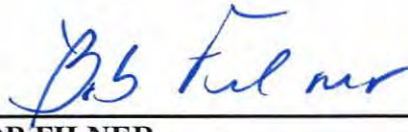
  
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Member of Congress

  
**JUDY CHU**  
Member of Congress

  
**LINDA SANCHEZ**  
Member of Congress

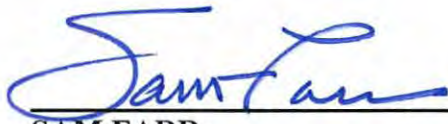
  
**JOSE SERRANO**  
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Member of Congress

  
**SAM FARR**  
Member of Congress

  
**JESSE JACKSON, JR.**  
Member of Congress

Cc:  
Chairmen Charlie Rangel, Henry Waxman, and George Miller  
Senators Jeff Bingaman, Kent Conrad, Chuck Grassley, Mike Enzi, and Olympia Snowe