

December 7, 2010

The Honorable Eliot Engel
U.S. House of Representatives
2161 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sue Myrick
U.S. House of Representatives
230 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Engel and Myrick,

We are writing to express our strong endorsement for your new legislation, the Partnering to Improve Maternity Care Quality Act (H.R. 6437), which would ensure that childbearing women and newborns in the Medicaid and CHIP programs receive high-quality, high-value care.

We believe that H.R. 6437 would take a tremendous step forward in maternity care quality improvement. First, the HHS Secretary would identify and publish an initial core set of evidence-based maternity care quality measures for use in data collection and reporting, in collaboration with stakeholders, and further develop, test, and validate additional needed measures. Measures will foster delivery of quality care to both women and newborns who are healthy and at low risk, including measures of low-intervention physiologic birth that conform to the normal functioning of labor, as appropriate, as well as to women and newborns at higher risk. We are particularly pleased that disparities and care coordination would be considered.

Second, your bill would adapt the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) facility, provider, and health plan surveys to assess the experience of care of childbearing women and newborns. These tools will allow for a focused assessment of distinctive aspects of maternal and newborn care and will enable women and families to take an active role in maternity care decision making.

Third, the development of a standardized reporting format and the voluntary reporting of maternity quality measures are essential to providing feedback to providers about their performance and information to patients and purchasers. We think a quality data set for measure collection within electronic health records further strengthens the contribution of this bill.

Our organizations also support the development of a demonstration project to determine innovative maternity care payment reforms that improve quality and value (e.g., bundled payment for a full episode of care for women and newborns or reimbursement for low-cost, high-value care, such as breastfeeding support).

Finally, we applaud your call for an Institute of Medicine report to identify a package of essential, evidence-based maternity care services for childbearing women and newborns. As a complement to services already identified by organizations such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and American Academy of Pediatrics, this information is critical to ensuring beneficiaries, regardless of where they reside, receive the best possible care.

Once again, thank you for introducing this comprehensive legislation. Please know that we stand ready to work with you and lend our support to this effort.

Sincerely,

American Association of Birth Centers
American College of Nurse Midwives
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Amnesty International USA
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform
Childbirth Connection
National Business Coalition on Health
National Committee on Quality Assurance
National Partnership for Women and Families
Pacific Business Group on Health
The Leapfrog Group