



August 5, 2009

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The undersigned nursing organizations write today to express our strong support for fundamental reform of the nation's health care/insurance system. Nurses remain committed to the principle that health care is a basic human right and that all persons are entitled to ready access to affordable, quality health care services.

Nurses believe that a system focused on primary care, prevention and chronic disease management can alleviate much of the expensive acute care that currently takes its toll in human suffering, as well as dollars. It is a worthwhile national investment. And nursing's strengths as a profession -- in providing holistic care that contemplates the individual, his or her family and community -- is exactly the emphasis sought in a reformed health care system.

Our organizations support a restructured health care system that ensures access to a standard package of essential health care services for all individuals and families. This requires the inclusion of a robust public health insurance plan option which would assure that patient choice is a reality and not an empty promise and above all, provides the access to preventative and early intervention that is missing from our current health care environment.

The inclusion of a public plan option will help make health care more affordable for patients, generate needed competition in the insurance market, and guarantee the availability of quality, affordable coverage for individuals and families no matter what happens. The public plan option could bring positive competition to bear on the private insurance market, encouraging patient-centered, value-driven health care delivery, creating a win-win for those whom the healthcare system is supposed to serve, the people of the United States.

Just as important, nurses recognize that coverage is nothing without access and quality. An emphasis on wellness and prevention, investment in nursing workforce development, recognition of the importance of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses to primary care, and demonstrated commitment to fostering full integration, coordination, and collaboration at all levels among our nation's health care workforce will improve our health care system.

Despite incremental efforts at reform, the number of uninsured continues to grow, the cost of care continues to rise, and the safety and quality of care are questioned. Harvard researchers have found that 62 percent of all personal bankruptcies in the U.S. in 2007 were caused by health problems—and 78 percent of those filers had insurance. The overwhelming problems of the health care system require significant attention on the part of health professionals, policy-makers, and the public.

The United States currently spends 2.4 trillion dollars every year on health care. If health care reform were to cost one trillion over the next ten years, this would represent only a 4 percent spending increase in cost. With this investment we can effect massive changes to the health care system—changes which will ultimately lead to significant health care savings, improved quality of care and coverage for millions who currently go without. We believe this is an investment worth making.

Our nursing organizations believe that the need for fundamental health care reform is critical and bold action is required **now**. Our nurses should no longer bear witness and share the needless suffering of the patients we serve due to the cost of inaction. We urge you to make health care reform a reality so together all our patients can receive safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient and equitable care.

Sincerely,

Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses (AMSN)

American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN)

American Association of Heart Failure Nurses (AAHFN)

American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants (AALNC)

American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM)

American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA)

American Nurses Association (ANA)

American Society of Plastic Surgical Nurses (ASPSN)

Association of Community Health Nursing Educators (ACHNE)

Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC)

Center for American Nurses (The Center)

Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA)

Infusion Nurses Society (INS)

International Nurses Society on Addictions (INTNSA)

National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses (NAON)

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP)

National Gerontological Nursing Association (NGNA)

National Nursing Staff Development Organization (NNSDO)

National Student Nurses' Association, Inc. (NSNA)

Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association (PCNA)

Quad Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations:

Association of Community Health Nursing Educators (ACHNE)

Association of State & Territorial Directors of Nursing (ASTDN)

American Public Health Association, Public Health Nursing Section (APHA)

American Nurses Association, Congress on Nursing Practice & Economics (ANA)

Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates (SGNA)