

July 28, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Strongly Supports H.R. 3200

Dear Speaker and Chairmen Waxman, Rangel and Miller:

On behalf of NASW and our 150,000 members, I am writing to express our appreciation and support for H.R. 3200, "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009." Professional social workers practice in health care because of their broad perspective on the range of physical, social, emotional, and environmental factors that have an effect on the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Social workers practice as part of health care teams because they are specifically trained to deal with the psychosocial implications of acute and chronic illnesses, and they are the largest providers of mental health services in the United States. They practice across the continuum of care including community and public health clinics, hospitals, nursing homes, home health care, primary care, veteran service networks, and hospices.

NASW is aware that changes in H.R. 3200 will be forthcoming, but we believe the bill already includes many provisions that are critical to effective, comprehensive health care reform.

In particular, social workers are pleased that H.R. 3200:

- Promises to extend coverage to nearly 37 million Americans largely through health insurance market reforms and expansion of Medicaid eligibility;
- Includes addiction and mental health care in the minimum benefits package in addition to applying the Wellstone Domenici parity law standard to all qualified health plans;
- Recognizes that fundamental Medicare reforms, including repeal of the sustainable growth rate formula that establishes payment rates for clinical social workers, are essential to the success of broader health system reforms;
- Encourages chronic disease management and care coordination through demonstration funding for primary care services;
- Begins to address health professions workforce concerns;
- Provides individuals with access to health insurance and provides premium assistance to those who cannot afford it;
- Includes prevention and wellness initiatives designed to keep Americans healthy; and
- Includes essential health insurance reforms such as eliminating coverage denials based on pre-existing conditions.

NASW pledges to work with House members and the leadership to support passage of this legislation to expand access to high quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth J. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth J. Clark, PhD, ACSW, MPH
Executive Director