

PARCA

Ensuring Patients' Access to Care

October 5, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
SH-522 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader Reid:

We, the undersigned members of the Patient Access to Responsible Care Alliance (PARCA), a coalition of organizations representing hundreds of thousands of non-MD health care professionals, are writing to you today regarding your efforts to enact a comprehensive national health reform bill and why it is imperative that such legislation address the important issue of provider non-discrimination.

To the extent the final reform legislation allows for the creation of a public plan or similar mechanism -- or creates new regional entities or allows for the marketing of health insurance on a national basis not subject to state regulation, it would be both appropriate and essential to adopt a provider non-discrimination provision at the federal level and make it applicable to all plans established or regulated by the final reform bill.

The above federal protection is needed because in today's delivery system, health plans routinely discriminate against whole classes of healthcare providers based solely on their licensure or certification. Such discrimination is not only wrong in principle, but is anti-competitive in nature, limits or even denies patient choice and access to a range of beneficial providers and, in general, results in a less than ideal and optimal delivery system. Additionally, ensuring that providers are not discriminated against in this fashion would help encourage the placement and location of a wide range of skilled healthcare professionals in those areas of our nation currently without sufficient numbers of health providers to adequately serve the public.

As you know, the Senate HELP Committee reform bill reported out in July of this year contains a non-discrimination provision that was offered by Senator Tom Harkin [**“SEC. 2713. NON-DISCRIMINATION IN HEALTH CARE**]. We strongly urge that you ensure the inclusion of an effective provider non-discrimination provision in the combined reform bill you bring to the Senate floor for consideration. Such provision should explicitly prohibit a health plan or insurer from discriminating against health care providers with respect to participation, reimbursement, covered services, and indemnification.

We note the adoption of an appropriate provider non-discrimination amendment is fully consistent with the goals of the majority of this Congress and the President. Enacting health care reform without adopting these appropriate safeguards puts at unnecessary risk patients' access to safe and affordable health care services, even while the legislation expands health insurance coverage.

Thank you for your leadership on the health reform issue and for your consideration of our views regarding this matter, the favorable resolution of which, is essential to our organizations and the patients we serve.

Sincerely,

The Patients' Access to Responsible Care Alliance

- Academy of Doctors of Audiology
- American Academy of Audiology
- American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
- American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
- American Chiropractic Association
- American College of Nurse Midwives
- American Optometric Association
- American Physical Therapy Association
- American Podiatric Medical Association
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
- National Association of Social Workers

PARCA is a coalition of organizations that represent the interests of millions of patients and non-MD/DO healthcare providers. It aims to provide federal policymakers with access to information from all areas of the healthcare community, in order to assist in the formulation of responsible, well-rounded healthcare policy. The coalition is committed to quality, cost-effective care, and ensuring patients have options in the delivery of such care.

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