



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*®

January 7, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
House Ways & Means Committee
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Speaker Pelosi and Chairmen Rangel, Waxman, Miller, Baucus, and Harkin:

On behalf of the 129,000 internal medicine physicians and medical student members of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to urge you to ensure that the final health reform bill **includes the strongest possible provisions to help ensure that there will be enough primary care physicians** to take care of the more than 30 million additional Americans who will soon have affordable coverage, as well as those who already have coverage. Recent studies show that the U.S. faces a shortage of more than 40,000 primary care physicians, even before taking into account increased demand for primary care associated with increased coverage.

ACP specifically requests that you include the following proposals from H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act, and H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act:

1. **Increased Medicaid and Medicare payments to primary care physicians.** Studies show that low levels of reimbursement to primary care, especially relative to other specialties, is a principal reason why medical students are not going into primary care. Under both bills, Medicaid will be expanded to cover millions of more Americans, but many of them will not be able to find a primary care doctor if low payment rates continue to make it impossible for primary care doctors to accept more Medicaid patients. The final bill should include the House proposal to increase Medicaid primary care payment rates to be equal to Medicare. Congress should also make Medicare payments to primary care more competitive by applying the Senate's 10 percent bonus to the more inclusive definition of primary care services included in the House bill, and also use the House's more inclusive eligibility criteria to determine which

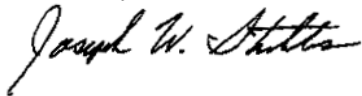
physicians will qualify. The Senate's more restrictive definition of primary care services and related eligibility requirements would exclude most primary care internists--and as many as 40 percent of family physicians--from qualifying for the bonus. The bonus should be permanent--as proposed by the House--rather than sunset after five years.

2. **Expand pilot-testing and implementation of Patient-Centered Medical Homes.** Both the House and Senate bills will provide new options to evaluate delivering primary care through Patient-Centered Medical Homes, but the House provision, which provides dedicated funding for two new Medicare medical home pilots, should be retained.
3. **Increase support for primary care training programs,** including providing mandatory increased funding for the National Health Service Corps and Title VII primary care training programs. Also include provisions in both bills to fund new programs to train physicians in community-based teaching centers and provide grants to expand existing primary care training programs. Include the House's provision for a front-line specialty loan repayment program. Redistribute at least 90 percent of unused residency slots to primary care, as the House bill would do.

Attached is a one-page summary of the key primary care programs from both bills that should be included in a final agreement.

Throughout this debate, ACP has been steadfast in standing with you for reforms to provide all Americans with access to affordable health care and to a primary care physician of their choice. We look forward to helping you complete your work on sending a bill to President Obama that advances these essential shared goals.

Yours truly,



Joseph W. Stubbs, MD, FACP
President