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May 12, 2011

Dear Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee:

On behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA), the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses, I am writing to express our opposition to H.R. 1683, the *State Flexibility Act of 2011*, and implore you to vote "no" when the bill comes before the Committee. H.R. 1683 would repeal the stability provisions in Medicaid and CHIP – putting at risk our nation's most vulnerable citizens.

Medicaid provides vital health care coverage to more than 58 million of the nation's most vulnerable populations. Medicaid finances care for 30 percent of all children, 68 percent of low income children and covers 70 percent of nursing home residents. In the last few years, Medicaid has also provided a reliable health insurance safety net for low income working families that have lost their health insurance. It is also the nation's largest payer of nursing home care, and each year, Medicaid helps millions of families with the cost of home based long-term care services.

H.R. 1683 would swell the ranks of the uninsured and threaten the viability of nursing homes, hospitals, and other needed providers. America's nurses are aware that these changes will contribute to emergency department overcrowding, delayed diagnosis of life-threatening diseases, increased reliance on charity care, and increased expenditures for preventable health complications. Such dramatic changes to this important program deserve further scrutiny and public comment.

As the largest single group of clinical health care professionals within the health system, licensed registered nurses are on the front lines of care and experience the positive or negative impact of your decisions. We strongly believe that affordable, accessible, quality, health care should not be a partisan or political issue. We appreciate your consideration of our position, and urge you to place patients first and vote "no" on H.R. 1683, the *State Flexibility Act of 2011*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rose J. Gonzalez". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rose Gonzalez, MPS, RN
Director of Government Affairs