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July 17, 2009

The Honorable George Miller Chairman Education & Labor Committee	The Honorable Charles Rangel Chairman Ways & Means Committee	The Honorable Henry Waxman Chairman Energy & Commerce Committee
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Dear Chairmen:

On behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA), I am writing to reaffirm our support for health care reform and HR 3200, the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009. ANA commends the work of the House Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Education and Labor committees for their work in the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009. This legislation clearly represents a movement toward much-needed, comprehensive and meaningful reform for our nation's healthcare system. America's nurses understand that this reform cannot wait; it must be done today.

The ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 2.9 million Registered Nurses through its 51 constituent member associations. The ANA particularly wants to express our appreciation for the recognition that, in order to meet our nation's health care needs we must have an integrated and well resourced national healthcare workforce policy, a system that focuses on wellness and prevention, and a high-quality public insurance option that complements and competes fairly with options offered by private insurers.

ANA remains committed to the principle health care is a basic human right and that all persons are entitled to ready access to affordable, quality health care services. ANA supports a restructured health care system that ensures universal access to a standard package of essential health care services for all individuals and families – as is illustrated in the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009. That is why ANA strongly supports the inclusion of a public health insurance plan option as an essential part of comprehensive health care reform in H.R. 3200.

ANA believes that inclusion of this public health insurance plan option would assure that patient choice is a reality and not an empty promise, and that a high-quality public health insurance plan option will above all, provide the access to preventative and early intervention that is missing from our current health care environment. ANA deeply appreciates the commitment to a public health insurance plan in H.R. 3200, and we look forward to partnering with you to make this plan a reality.

As the largest single group of clinical health care professionals within the health system, licensed registered nurses are educated and practice within a holistic framework that views the individual, family and community as an interconnected system that can keep us well and help us heal. Registered nurses are fundamental to the critical shift needed in health services delivery, with the goal of transforming the current "sick care" system into a *true* "health care" system.

ANA knows that registered nurses are the backbone of hospitals, community clinics, school health programs, home health and long-term care programs, and serve patients in many other roles and settings.

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), in particular Nurse Practitioners and Nurse Midwives are proven providers of high-quality, cost effective primary care. The America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 clearly recognizes the support, development and deployment of this keystone profession, is essential for any quality health reform plan to succeed.

ANA deeply appreciates the recognition of the need to expand the nursing workforce, and thanks you for your commitment to amend the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs under the Public Health Service Act. We also are grateful for the financial commitment to the Title VIII programs made in H.R. 3200. The funding stream created through the Public Health Investment Fund and the dollars committed through 2019 would offer vital resources and much needed funding stability for these important programs. We are pleased to see so many important provisions included in the bill that will help address the growing nursing shortage. We also appreciate the inclusion of the definition of the Nurse Managed Health Centers under the Title VIII definitions.

In addition, ANA applauds the use of "community-based multidisciplinary teams" to support primary care through the Medical Home Model. This model demonstrates a commitment to quality, coordinated care by all health providers, and represents a focus, not just on treating illness, but on emphasizing wellness and prevention. ANA is especially pleased that Nurse Practitioners have been recognized as primary care providers and authorized to lead Medical Homes. Their skill and education, which emphasizes patient and family-centered, whole-person care, makes them particularly well-suited providers to lead the Medical Home Model. ANA commends the many measures in the H.R. 3200 that would bolster the nursing profession, and for its demonstrated commitment to fostering full integration, coordination, and collaboration at all levels among our nation's health care workforce.

Once again, the need for fundamental reform of the U.S. health care system is critical. Bold action is called for to create a health care system that is responsive to the needs of consumers and provides equal access to safe, high-quality care for all in a cost-effective manner. ANA and nurses around the country are ready to work with you to advance and enact into law H.R. 3200, the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009. Our nurses should no longer bear witness to the cost of inaction on the lives of the patients we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca M. Patton".

Rebecca M. Patton MSN, RN, CNOR
President
American Nurses Association