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**NEWS RELEASE**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**June 12, 2009**

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## **ANA Supports Public Plan Option for Health Reform, Contrary to Doctors' Group**

### **STATEMENT**

**SILVER SPRING, MD** – The American Nurses Association (ANA) believes the best way to achieve its overall health system goal – guaranteed, affordable, high-quality health care for all – is through the inclusion of a public health insurance plan option in any health care reform legislation. ANA is deeply disappointed to learn of the American Medical Association's position that private health insurance alone should dictate coverage options for all who don't qualify for existing public plans, such as Medicare, as described in the June 11, 2009, *New York Times* article, "Doctors' Group Opposes Public Insurance Plan."

A public health insurance plan would expand choices and help protect against potential economic calamity for individuals or families who are not satisfied with their current health coverage, have difficulty paying for their health care, or cannot find affordable coverage. ANA supports President Obama's call for a public plan option, and applauds its inclusion in Senator Kennedy's comprehensive health reform legislation introduced June 9.

What is lacking in our current health care system, driven by for-profit, private insurance companies, is the reliability and predictability of accessible, affordable care. Many people have encountered the unpleasant reality that they can be denied care when they need it most, or lose coverage when they can least afford it. Private insurers can discriminate based on preexisting conditions, health status, gender, age, claims history, or other factors. In addition, in this unstable employment market, the loss of a job often leads to loss of health coverage, as insurance becomes less affordable.

**MORE . . .**

ANA disagrees with the American Medical Association's speculation that a public health insurance plan option would threaten to restrict patient choice by driving out private insurers, as stated in the *New York Times* story. The choice of a public health insurance plan will create a level playing field, where for-profit private plans will have to compete with each other out in the open under fair rules. Patients should be able to see what they're getting so they can make the choice about where they purchase coverage and not receive a surprise from their insurer buried in the fine print when they seek health care services.

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*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 nurses associations and its 24 specialty nursing and workforce advocacy affiliate organizations that currently connect to ANA as affiliates. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.*