

**STAND FOR QUALITY**  
*in Health Care*

July 17, 2009

The Honorable George Miller  
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles B. Rangel  
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1102 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman  
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Stand for Quality comments on H.R. 3200, “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009”

Dear Chairmen Miller, Rangel, and Waxman:

Our organizations are united in the belief that those who advocate for the rights of patients and consumers, deliver care, operate health plans, manufacture drugs and other devices, purchase care and regulate care on the public’s behalf can come together to transform health care in America to be safer, more effective, and more efficient. We wish to congratulate the House Tri-Committee and you, their leaders, for including in the “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act” multiple provisions that can support significant delivery system reform.

These reforms are significant in and of themselves. They are also key steps to laying the foundation for a more cost-effective system over time. Combined with the information technology and comparative effectiveness provisions that were enacted in the economic recovery legislation, they can provide a powerful set of tools to improve care and to control costs.

Our organizations, along with 200 other health care stakeholder groups, came together earlier this year to ensure that health reform builds on the lessons of quality measurement and improvement learned over the past ten years – a period in which these efforts grew from scant ideas to an exciting vision of a transformed health care delivery system.

It is from this perspective that we write to thank you for the leadership and hard work you provided to the nation in drafting the “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act” of 2009.

We have earlier shared with you our findings and recommendations in “*Building a Foundation for High Quality, Affordable Health Care: Linking Performance Measurement to Health Reform.*” We have met with you and your staff on repeated occasions to explain our work and discuss how best these lessons-learned can be applied to the great endeavor on which the Congress is now embarked.

No one piece of legislation will encompass the myriad changes needed to improve health care in our country; nor could any series of new statutes, however well-crafted. Federal legislation can, however, provide the policy framework for change. Change will only happen when those who are part of the health care system itself are willing to put differences aside and think and act anew.

What Congress can do and what we believe your committees have done is provide a framework for the policy elements necessary to transform care. We believe you have made an admirable start, and then some, in developing a framework that:

- Establishes National Priorities and Goals through a multi-stakeholder process to guide measure development, reporting and improvement activities and assess progress in achieving them.
- Enhances a robust structure for developing and endorsing consensus measures within health care that are critical to our efforts to continuously improve and gauge our progress over time.
- Challenges providers, clinicians, insurers and purchasers to develop methodologies for improving the quality of care and reforming payments to promote value and re-engineer care delivery.
- Provides development and testing of innovative care models such as “medical homes” and accountable care organizations and of methods to engage patients in shared decision-making.
- Provides resources for fostering the development and dissemination of innovative methodologies and strategies to improve care delivery and provide practitioners with game-changing tools and techniques to help them improve practice and decision-making at the point of care.
- Focuses resources to strengthen the healthcare workforce, especially in the areas of primary and palliative care.

Very importantly, in many of these areas, your legislation makes use of existing and proven public-private sector structures, instead of relying solely on government entities. Engaging all stakeholders will lead to more rapid and sustained change throughout the entire healthcare financing and delivery system.

A fundamental building block of virtually all of the programs you have included in your draft is a robust quality enterprise capable of measuring, reporting, and improving patient care. One critical element of the quality enterprise is ensuring coordinated and consistent public-private sector data collection and aggregation. By relying on emerging health information technology we can reduce the administrative burden of data collection while improving care. We look forward to working with you to strengthen and refine your draft legislation and to working with Congress on the complex task of enacting the final legislation.

Transforming care is at once an urgent need and a long-term process. We also want to caution you that the major changes in processes that are at the core of improving care will take time. We have learned in our work over the past decade that bold undertakings paired with patience and care is critically important to success. We need to approach these structural changes with great care. We, and you, owe the American people the highest possible level of commitment to getting things right.

Sincerely,

The Stand for Quality Steering Committee

**Janet M. Corrigan**, Ph.D., M.B.A., President and Chief Executive Officer, National Quality Forum

**Rita Munley Gallagher**, Ph.D., R.N., Senior Policy Fellow, American Nurses Association

**Karen Ignagni**, M.B.A., President and Chief Executive Officer, America's Health Insurance Plans

**Charles N. Kahn III**, M.P.H., President, Federation of American Hospitals

**Peter V. Lee**, J.D., Executive Director for National Health Policy, Pacific Business Group on Health

**Mark B. McClellan**, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform at the Brookings Institution and Leonard D. Schaeffer Chair in Health Policy Studies

**Debra L. Ness**, President, National Partnership for Women & Families

**Nancy H. Nielsen**, M.D., Ph.D., President, American Medical Association

**Kenneth W. Porter**, Senior Vice President, American Benefits Council

**William L. Roper**, M.D., M.P.H., Dean, UNC School of Medicine, Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs and CEO, UNC Healthcare System (Chair, National Quality Forum)

**John C. Rother**, Executive Vice President, Policy and Strategy, AARP

**Gerald M. Shea**, Assistant to the President for Governmental Affairs, AFL-CIO

**John Tooker**, M.D., M.B.A., F.A.C.P., Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer, American College of Physicians