

April 15, 2009

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
Chairman
Senate HELP Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate HELP Committee
835 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Ranking Member Enzi:

As you and your colleagues continue to work on health reform, the over one hundred undersigned coalitions, groups, and organizations urge your support for addressing health inequities among underserved communities and populations, and ensuring the safety and quality of health services for all. We respectfully request a hearing to discuss opportunities within health reform to ameliorate and eliminate the grave disparities in health status and health services.

Striking disparities in health status exist among various communities and populations throughout the United States, which include shorter life expectancy, higher rates of chronic health conditions, and disability. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), disparities are also observed in most aspects of health care, including care for chronic conditions such as mental health disorders and substance use, HIV/AIDS, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, oral health conditions, infant mortality and morbidity, respiratory disease, and end stage renal disease.

The undersigned organizations recognize that comprehensive health reform is essential to improving the safety and quality of health services, and will help to improve the health of everyone in our country. As the United States continues to struggle with how to improve health equity and ensure that all have access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health services, we urge you to seriously address this issue in health reform and convene a hearing.

We would like to thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request and offer our assistance in addressing this critical issue. Please contact Daniel E. Dawes, J.D., at (202) 682-5110 or ddawes@apa.org, if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

AARP
Adventist HealthCare
Advocates for Youth
Aetna
AIDS Action Council
AIDS Project Los Angeles
AIDSmeds.com
America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP)
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association on Health and Disability

American Association Pastoral Counselors
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Counseling Association
American Diabetes Association
American Heart Association
American Hospital Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Social Health Association
American Stroke Association
Artists for a New South Africa (ANSA)
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU)
Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now
Association of Language Companies
Association of Professional Chaplains
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Black Women's Health Imperative
Campaign for Mental Health Reform
Center for Advancing Health
Child Welfare League of America
Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
CommonHealth ACTION
Community Health Councils
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)
Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)
External Partners Group for the CDC National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities
Families USA
Gender Education & Advocacy, Inc.
Georgia Rural Urban Summit
Health Access California
Health Care for America Now
Healthcare Equality Project
Hispanic Federation
HIV Law Project
HIVictorious, Inc
Human Rights Campaign
Ivan Walks and Associates, LLC
Khmer Health Advocates
Latino Agenda for Healthcare Reform
Latinos for National Health Insurance
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Mental Health America
National Alliance for Hispanic Health

National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association of People With AIDS
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
National Birth Defects Prevention Network
National Coalition for LGBT Health
National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD)
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Urban Indian Health
National Disability Rights Network
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Foundation for Mental Health
National Health Equity Coalition
National Health Law Program (NHeLP)
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Immigration Law Center
National Indian Project Center
National Latino Behavioral Health Association (NLBHA)
National League for Nursing
National PTA
National Puerto Rican Coalition
National REACH Coalition
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
North Carolina Fair Share
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations
Out of Many, One Coalition
Papa Ola Lokahi
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition (REHDC)
Satcher Health Leadership Institute at the Morehouse School of Medicine
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE)
STOP AIDS Project
Summit Health Institute for Research and Education (SHIRE)
The AIDS Institute
The Disparities Solutions Center at Massachusetts General Hospital
The Praxis Project
US Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA)
Virginia Organizing Project
Washington Community Action Network
West Virginia WV Citizen Action
World Professional Association for Transgender Health

Joined by: Consumers Union

CC: President of the United States Barack Obama

House Energy and Commerce Committee
House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Health
House Ways and Means Committee
House Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Health
House Education and Labor Committee
Senate Finance Committee
Senate Indian Affairs Committee
Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus
Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust
Congressional Hispanic Caucus
The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
The Honorable Christopher Dodd
The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski