

February 25, 2008

Honorable John D. Dingell, Chair  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives

Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr., Chair  
Subcommittee on Health  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives

RE: National Organizations Support H.R. 3014, Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2007

We the undersigned national organizations are writing to express our strong support of H.R. 3014, the “Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2007.” We also request that you take action to hold a hearing on this important legislation early in 2008. The provisions in H.R. 3014 are critical to reducing health disparities and restoring equity to healthcare coverage for individuals most in need of assistance, by improving access to health care and health care education for underrepresented minorities. H.R. 3014 would go a long way toward closing health care and quality gaps for communities of color as well as language minorities, gaps that have been well-documented for many years.

We are pleased with the provisions of this legislation that create alternative coverage opportunities for many low- and moderate-income immigrants and their families. Despite a robust presence in the workforce, many immigrants and their families are unable to connect with health coverage that bridges them with necessary health care services. H.R. 3014 takes a critical step to grant states the option to cover lawfully-residing immigrant children and pregnant women under the Medicaid and State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP); these children are currently barred from coverage for five years after their arrival in the U.S. These health care restorations will help to ensure that needy children have a healthy start so that they can fully develop and grow. And we know that every dollar spent on prenatal care saves \$4 or more in longer-term medical costs. This provision is a long-standing priority for addressing a core barrier to health care: the lack of health coverage.

HR 3014 also will improve the quality of health care for all communities of color by promoting culturally- and linguistically-appropriate services and care for individuals with language barriers. Successful health care delivery depends on the ability of both patient and provider to experience effective communication. The bill provides federal support for the provision of language services through Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP reimbursements for participating providers. The legislation also makes available critically-needed funds for development and implementation of language interpretation services, and supports training for health care providers using models of cultural competence that will benefit rural areas and Indian Country. The bill would enhance the health literacy of consumers and offer support to community health workers who promote cost-effective prevention strategies.

The need for change in our health care system is rising to the top of the national agenda. We must make deliberate attempts to ensure that those who are most in need of quality health care

services are included. We cannot continue to leave critical communities behind. H.R. 3014 addresses many of the most important causes of unequal access to health care and treatment. We urge you build upon your commitments and work together with us to pass the Health Equity and Accountability Act of 2007 as a critical part of making healthcare more accessible to everyone in our nation.

Sincerely,

American Friends Services Committee  
American Humane Association  
American Public Health Association  
Americans for Democratic Action, Inc.  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Asian American Justice Center  
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations  
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs  
Campaign for America's Future  
Catholic Health Association of the U.S.  
Child Welfare League of America  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Community Action Partnership  
Easter Seals  
Families USA  
Farmworker Justice  
First Focus  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Jewish Council on Public Affairs  
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)  
Migrant Legal Action Program  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Alliance to End Homelessness  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum  
National Association of Community Health Centers  
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems  
National Center for Law and Economic Justice  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of La Raza  
National Health Law Program (NHeLP)  
National Hispanic Council on Aging  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Organization for Women

National Partnership for Women and Families  
National Priorities Project  
National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc.  
National Women's Health Network  
National Women's Law Center  
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby.  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
RESULTS  
Service Employees International Union  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center  
Tahirh Justice Center  
U.S. Action  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Methodist Women  
Voices for America's Children  
Women of Reform Judaism

cc: Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker  
Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader  
Honorable James Clyburn, Majority Whip  
Honorable Rahm Emanuel, Democratic Caucus Chair  
U.S. House of Representatives