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


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