

# American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



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November 19, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid  
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US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus  
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US Senate Finance Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Dodd  
Former Acting Chairman  
Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

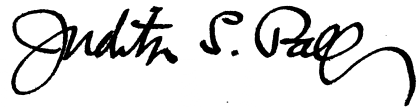
On behalf of the 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and surgical specialists of the American Academy of Pediatrics who are committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, we write to express our sincere gratitude for your introduction of the "Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act of 2009." The Academy supports the legislation.

The bill takes significant steps toward achieving the Academy's highest priorities for health reform. These priorities include coverage for all children in the US, age-appropriate benefits in a medical home, and appropriate payment rates to guarantee access to covered services. Coordination of Exchange, Medicaid and CHIP enrollment should lead to greatly expanded coverage for currently uninsured children, most of whom are already eligible for CHIP or Medicaid. As to benefits, your legislation's requirement that most private insurance provide no-copay coverage for age-appropriate preventive services shows great wisdom. Increasing access to these services, contained in the consensus guidelines supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration, is a leap forward in child health, and should significantly decrease the incidence and cost of future adult disease. Also, the Academy thanks you for the inclusion of needed provisions for children in regards to follow-on biologics.

The Academy hopes to see forward movement in a few remaining areas as the health reform process comes to a conclusion. We urge you to include in any final bill policies to increase access to services for all children, not just coverage, for the poorest children. We note the inclusion of the pediatric subspecialty workforce provision that will increase access to services for the sickest children who require pediatric subspecialty and pediatric surgical specialty services. But access depends on both an adequate workforce and reasonable payment for services. Payment must be improved if we expect Medicaid to become the backbone of the United States health care system, as your legislation contemplates. The Academy also notes that in out-years, children enrolled in Medicaid will also receive a lower commitment of federal funding in comparison to newly-eligible populations and would suggest that the incentives these funding streams create for states should also be addressed. Children should be valued at least as highly as adults.

We look forward to standing with you as we near the end of the legislative process. We greatly appreciate your consideration of the needs of children in health reform and will continue to work with you to ensure that the life success of every child is our nation's highest priority.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith S. Palfrey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Judith S. Palfrey, MD, FAAP  
President

JSP: rh