



November 20, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Office of the Majority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

On behalf of the more than 1200 community health centers nationwide and the 20 million people they serve, I write today to offer our continued support of your efforts to reform our nation's health care system. America's health centers know better than anyone the urgent need to enact comprehensive health reform that ensures both coverage and *access* for all Americans. We support your efforts to advance the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act, and we look forward to working with you to improve this legislation as it moves ahead in the legislative process. We especially appreciate your leadership and that of other key Senators who have worked with you on this important collaboration, in particular Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin, Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, Banking Committee Chair Chris Dodd, HELP Committee Chair Tom Harkin, and Senators Bernie Sanders, Robert Menendez, and Jeff Bingaman.

Based on our 40-plus year history of caring for the nation's medically underserved, health centers have a unique understanding of the extent to which our health care system is broken and has victimized far too many people- none more so than the millions of low-income people who have no health insurance today but stand to gain coverage through your legislation. We strongly support the Medicaid expansions in this bill, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that affordable coverage is available to all, both through Medicaid and the new Health Insurance Exchanges.

Health centers also recognize that coverage alone does not equal access to care. We believe that in order to deliver on the promise of reform, it is critical to ensure that all newly insured Americans have access to a high-quality and cost-effective medical home, such as a health center. We look forward to working with you to improve this bill to include provisions previously included in the Senate Finance Committee that will help to ensure the continued strength of the Health Centers program in the years to come.

Finally, we appreciate the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act's recognition of the importance of growing a more robust and diverse primary care workforce. In particular, provisions that call for an expanded National Health Service Corps and provide dedicated funding for residency training in community-based settings ("teaching health centers") are

important steps forward in growing the workforce the country needs in order to successfully implement health care reform.

We look forward to continuing to work with you throughout this process to ensure that our shared goal of enacting comprehensive health care reform is achieved. We appreciate your leadership and your dedication to this historic effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Van Coverden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Van Coverden
President and CEO

Cc: The Honorable Richard Durbin, Senate Majority Whip
The Honorable Max Baucus, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Chris Dodd, Chairman, Senate Banking Committee
The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman, Senate HELP Committee
The Honorable Bernie Sanders
The Honorable Robert Menendez
The Honorable Jeff Bingaman