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December 3, 2008

Senator Max Baucus, Chair, Finance Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Baucus,

The National Academies of Practice commends you and your staff for its outstanding work in producing "Call to Action: Health Reform 2009." The NAP has developed a series of principles which we believe should be part of health reform. We are delighted to see that the "Call to Action" contains many of the elements we agree are important. Specifically, we agree that there should be a public policy that all Americans have access to affordable health care. Your plan would do that. We agree that prevention must be at least as much a core strategy as cure. Your plan does that. We agree that system reform must address the projected health problems of rapidly changing population demographics. Your plan includes chronic disease management changes, and addressing health disparities. We believe that the financing plan for health reform should be measured by ease of patient understanding; administrative costs and degree of profit to insurers and providers; and acceptability to employers, insurers, Congress and the public. Your mixed plan represents one set of options; there are others that might offer additional advantages.

There are some areas, however, where we believe strengthening could occur. We present for your consideration the following:

- 1) The definition of primary care used in the document seems to us too limited. Mental health needs parity. Also, failure to provide basic dental, vision and hearing services can be as destructive as failure to address the physical needs of patients.
- 2) Health manpower issues are only partially addressed in the paper. A more comprehensive approach is needed if access and system reform goals are to be achieved.
- 3) The promise of interdisciplinary care models is not addressed. We believe demonstration authority should be included in the final bill.
- 4) The non-human world must be included in the concept of health.

NAP policy papers and publications are attached to further explain these concepts.

Sincerely,

Mary Costanza, MD  
NAP President

*Distinguished interdisciplinary advisors to health care policy makers*

PO Box 1037, Edgewood, MD 21040-0337 · 410-676-3390 · fax: 410-676-7980 · www.NAPPractice.org · naphdq@comcast.net