



The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
U.S. Capitol, Room S-221  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol, Room H-232  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dick Durbin  
Assistant Majority Leader of the Senate  
309 Hart Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
House Democratic Majority Leader  
U.S. Capitol, Room H-107  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor and Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Dodd  
448 Russell Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman, Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Henry Waxman  
Chairman, Committee on Energy & Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

January 15, 2010

Dear Senators and Representatives:

On behalf of our state and local health departments, we thank you for your hard work on health reform and urge that the core public health infrastructure language for state, local, and tribal health departments in the House passed Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962) be included in any final version of health reform legislation. Investing in state and local public health systems is a direct investment in the health and wellness of the American people.

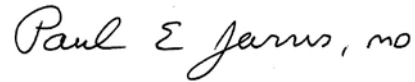
State health departments are experiencing a severe erosion of resources at the same time that the demands on them are increasing. Seventy-four percent of state health departments have reduced services and more than 15,000 state and local jobs have been lost since 2008. In 2009 alone, local health departments lost 8,000 jobs. The infrastructure of state and local health departments is the neglected backbone of public health protection upon which every American relies. It provides population-wide prevention and health protection for infectious diseases such as H1N1, food borne outbreaks, chronic diseases, and many other public health threats. Evidence-based public health actions benefit all health care consumers, providers, and payors by reducing the human and economic toll of preventable diseases and deaths. The core public health infrastructure, public health investment fund, and workforce provisions included in the House passed and Senate merged bills would provide a long-needed stable, reliable source of funding for strengthening the nation's state health departments and improving the nation's health.

The House bill also includes a critical provision that allows Vaccines for Children Act funds to be used at public health clinics to expand access to childhood vaccines that saves thousands of lives and prevents

many hospitalizations and illnesses. We support inclusion of this language in any final health reform legislation.

With your leadership, Congress can transform our nation's health system to help Americans be healthier. We lend our strong support to your efforts towards enactment of one of the most important pieces of legislation of our time.

Sincerely,



Paul E. Jarris, MD, MBA  
Executive Director  
ASTHO



Robert Pestronk, MPH  
Executive Director  
NACCHO