



Ohio State Medical Association
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July 17, 2009

The Honorable John A. Boehner
U.S. House of Representatives
1011 Longworth HOB
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Boehner:

I am writing to express the views of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA) regarding H.R. 3200, the "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009."

The OSMA has reviewed H.R. 3200. The legislation includes many features that are consistent with the OSMA's health system reform policies:

- According to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, the bill would provide health insurance coverage for nearly 97 percent of legal non-elderly U.S. residents.
- The bill includes health insurance market reforms such as eliminating coverage denials for pre-existing conditions.
- The bill establishes a health insurance exchange to provide choice of plans to uninsured, self-insured and small business employees.
- Preventive services coverage is improved under the bill.

H.R. 3200 also includes more than \$230 billion in substantial funding for the physician community, including \$228.5 billion to eliminate the accumulated SGR cuts, among other provisions.

While we believe H.R. 3200 is a positive step toward achieving comprehensive health system reform legislation this year, there are deficiencies in the proposed legislation as well. Specifically, the bill:

- Does not include any medical liability reform measures.
- Contains payment cuts for imaging services.
- Bans new physician-owned hospitals and restricts those currently in operation.
- Lacks adequate measures to improve consumer responsibility in controlling one's own health care costs.

In addition, the current structure of the "public option" raises concerns, although the OSMA remains open to an alternative coverage proposal. Any such proposal should provide competition from a non-profit entity, self-supported through premiums and rigid solvency requirements, where payment rates to physicians are negotiated and where patients have access to out-of-network benefits.

H.R. 3200 helps move the legislative process one step closer to the critical negotiations that will occur when congressional leaders and the Obama Administration reconcile differences between House and Senate bills. It will be these final negotiations that will determine the outcome of key issues such as Medicare physician payment and the details of any public insurance option and financing mechanisms.

The OSMA will continue to work with the Ohio Congressional Delegation and others to improve the health care reform legislation being considered in the House and the Senate. We reserve judgment on any final legislation until the details are made available and we are able to compare it to our health system reform policies. We commend the efforts of Congress to address these important issues.

Sincerely,

Roy H. Thomas, MD
President