



November 19, 2008

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

Dear Senator Baucus:

On behalf of the over 630 member institutions affiliated with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), I would like to express our admiration for the dedication, time, and effort you and your staff made in drafting the exceptional white paper, *Call to Action: Health Reform 2009*. As the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate nursing education representing over 260,000 students and 13,000 faculty, AACN is pleased that you recognize the important role nurses play in community health and that nurse practitioners are a reliable source of quality primary care. Beyond nursing, it is clear that your plan has thoughtful approaches to improving coverage, controlling costs, and ultimately, improving the quality of health care — all principles that AACN firmly supports.

As the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress convenes in January and begins to consider health reform, AACN asks that you continue to work collaboratively with all sectors of the healthcare community because no single provider group or stakeholder can truly solve the healthcare crisis. As you are probably aware, Registered Nurses (RNs) are the single largest group of health professionals in our delivery system. RNs are involved in every aspect of health care from practicing in the hospital setting to administering health information technology systems to conducting research on disease prevention. Nurses are educated to provide holistic and patient-centered care that addresses the needs of patients and their families. This includes attention to the social and economic factors of health care, and the pervasive issues within the current system that prevent providers from delivering quality care. As you and your staff work to reshape health care and in the coming months of debate and deliberation, we would like to offer our support and expertise as you seek input from nursing leaders and others to ensure that innovative policy solutions are successful in reforming America's struggling healthcare system.

AACN is ready and willing to connect you and your staff with nursing leaders, researchers, and policy experts who can offer you support and critical insights on health reform. As a key stakeholder, AACN also is working aggressively to ensure that a variety of initiatives are implemented to address the ongoing shortage of nurses. We understand that the presence of a robust and well educated professional nursing workforce is a central component of the nation's ability to ensure access to safe, quality, and affordable health care.

AACN again applauds the work you and your staff have put forth, and we look forward to working with you on health reform. Suzanne Begeny, AACN Director of Government Affairs, will follow up with your staff. Additionally, she can be contacted at 202-463-6930, extension 247 or sbegeny@aacn.nche.edu if immediate information is desired. We look forward to offering assistance as you move forward with this work.

Sincere Regards,

Fay Raines, PhD, RN  
President

**ADVANCING HIGHER EDUCATION IN NURSING**