

PHYSICIANS FOR



REPRODUCTIVE
CHOICE AND HEALTH

Headquarters:

55 West 39th Street
Suite 1001
New York, NY 10018-3889
Tel: 646-366-1890
Fax: 646-366-1897

West Coast Office:

131 Steuart Street
Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94105
Tel: 415-947-0680
Fax: 415-947-0683
www.prch.org

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*As of December 2008

Jodi Magee
Executive Director

November 9, 2009

President Barack H. Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are all physicians and board members of Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health. We are deeply grateful to you for making health care reform a national priority. Now America is coming to understand what we see every day: the unnecessary pain and death that results when people can't afford health insurance or their insurers won't cover their basic needs. This suffering hurts not only our patients but their families, their workplaces, and the nation.

As an organization, our chief concern is women, girls, and their reproductive health. For months, we and the thousands of doctors we represent have been championing your vision for health care reform as the best way to improve women's health. We have traveled from across the country to meet with legislators on Capitol Hill and share our stories about patients who could not pay for reproductive health care. We have published these stories in op-eds and letters that have appeared in more than 50 newspapers. Hundreds of us have called and emailed senators and representatives before critical votes, urging them to help women by supporting health care reform.

So far, the female patient has made some crucial gains. We are thrilled that health reform will put an end to gender rating. We welcome the requirements in the House and Senate bills that would force insurers to cover Pap tests, mammograms, and maternity care in full. Our patients will have a better shot at staying healthy and alive if they can rely on their insurers to pay for those services.

But we worry. Pap tests, mammograms, and maternity care are vital to our patients, but these services alone will not keep our patients healthy. Women need contraception to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Women who are too young for routine mammograms need breast exams to catch potential tumors. Women need pelvic exams for early detection of STDs, cysts, fibroids, and other common conditions that can cause permanent damage or death.

We find ourselves watching women get sick and die young because they can't afford those basic reproductive health services, each of which is part of the standard gynecological checkup. To give women and girls a decent chance at

health, we want to help you make insurance available to the uninsured. We also need you to help us make insurance work for women.

As a step in that direction, we collaborated with Senator Barbara Mikulski on an amendment to the HELP Committee bill. This amendment would stop insurers from burdening women with extra costs for contraception, breast exams, pelvic exams, and other core reproductive care. The amendment passed. But the Senate Finance Committee and House bills have no such provision.

To realize the promise of health reform, insurers must provide full coverage for fundamental reproductive health services. These are necessities for half of the United States population. All insurance companies must assume responsibility for the regular needs of their customers. Cost sharing for reproductive health care only puts women and their families at risk. We would be glad to lend our medical experience and expertise to eliminating this dangerous practice.

Finally, we would like to help you preserve the reproductive health care that insured women can now obtain. Abortion is critical to women's health as a backup for failed contraception. We cannot let health reform endanger women by eliminating their access to affordable abortion. Our physicians contributed to the defeat of the more than 35 anti-choice amendments to the reform bills to date. Please join us in fending off further attacks on the insurance coverage women have and need to pay for abortion.

Mr. President, you have given us hope. We have been advocating for our patients' reproductive health for 17 years, pushing for acceptance of women's health as intrinsic to human health. With health care reform, you have an opportunity to reshape the insurance system to reflect medical reality.

Our president and CEO Jodi Magee will contact your staff to see if our physicians can provide any information or services. She can connect you with obstetrician/gynecologists, family medicine practitioners, adolescent medicine specialists, and physicians from many other specialties. If you need to reach Jodi, you can do so at 646-649-9910 or jodi@prch.org.

Please don't leave women and girls behind.

Yours respectfully,


Susie Baldwin, MD, MPH


Frances Batzer, MD, MBE


Daniela Diaz


Eve Espey, MD


Margaret E. Johnson Baylson, MD


Atsuko Koyama, MD, MPH



Douglas Laube, MD, MEd



Larry Leeman, MD



Sara Buchdahl Levine, MD, MPH



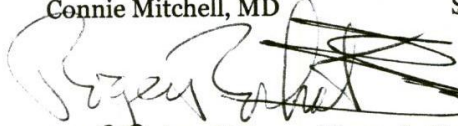
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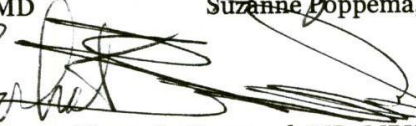
Suzanne Poppema, MD



Ralph Riviello, MD, MS



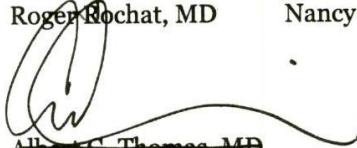
Roger Rochat, MD



Nancy L. Stanwood, MD, MPH



Michelle Staples-Horne, MD, MS, MPH



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