



December 15, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader of the United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Amendment to Senate health care reform bill to include the direct care workforce as a "high priority" focus area for the National Health Care Workforce Commission (H. R. 3590).

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

Thank you for your leadership in advancing health care reform this year. We, the undersigned organizations, write in support of Senators Casey, Kohl and Feingold's amendment to the "Patient Protection and Affordable Choices Act". The amendment designates the direct care workforce as a "high priority" research area for the proposed National Healthcare Workforce Commission. This no-cost amendment will ensure that the Commission will review the current and projected workforce needs of direct care workers and provide comprehensive recommendations to Congress and the Administration on how best to align direct care workforce resources with our national needs.

Direct care workers are the backbone of our nation's long-term care system, providing essential care, support and daily living services to more than 15 million Americans who need help to achieve their goals, live as independently as possible and maintain their level of community involvement. As a result of a rapidly growing aging population, over 1 million additional direct care jobs are projected to be needed in the next 10 years, making it among the fastest-growing occupations. Unfortunately, the US is experiencing a severe shortage of qualified direct care workers to provide personal and long-term care and support services. Direct care work is demanding, working conditions are often difficult, and turnover is high because the job is strenuous. The lack of appreciation that direct care workers receive are reflected through poor wages and benefits, limited opportunities for advancement and inadequate training.

As the Senate continues its debate on health care reform legislation, we urge you to include Senators Casey, Kohl and Feingold's amendment in the final bill. Our ability to meet our nation's long-term care challenges depends largely on a strong direct care workforce. We thank you for your leadership and commitment to making health care more affordable for millions of Americans.

Sincerely,

ADAPT of Texas
AFSCME
Alpha One
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
American Association for Long Term Care Nursing
American Network of Community Options and Resources
Arizona Direct Caregivers Association
Beth Abraham Health Services
Casa De Maryland
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation
College of Direct Support
Community Partnership for Improved Long-Term Care
Cooperative Care
Coulee Region Long Term Care Workforce Coalition
Direct Care Alliance
Family Values @ Work
Indiana Caregivers Association
Iowa Caregivers Association
MaturityWorks Alliance
National Association of Direct Care Workers of Color
National Council on Aging
National Day Laborers Organizing Network
National Domestic Worker Alliance /La Alianza Nacional de Trabajadoras del Hogar
National Family Caregivers Association
National Network of Career Nursing Assistants
National Women's Law Center
NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
Pennsylvania Direct Care Worker Association
PHI
Restaurant Opportunities Centers United
SEIU
The Workforce Alliance
UCLA Labor Center
Wider Opportunities for Women
Wisconsin Direct Caregiver Alliance

Cc: The Honorable Robert Casey
The Honorable Herb Kohl
The Honorable Russ Feingold