

# American Psychiatric Association

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September 17, 2009

President J. James Rohack, M.D.  
American Medical Association  
515 N. State Street  
Chicago, IL 6065

Dear Dr. Rohack:

I am pleased to let you know that, after thorough discussion, the Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) has voted unanimously to support H.R. 3200, America's Affordable Health Choices Act, as the basis for health reform. In doing so, the APA is pleased to stand with the American Medical Association. The APA Board of Trustees also voted to support the concept of a public plan option based upon the voluntary participation of physicians and other healthcare professionals in the ongoing dialogue of health care reform.

While H.R. 3200 is – like any bill – not perfect, we recognize that it offers many positive benefits for psychiatrists and other physicians, and most importantly for our patients. These include:

- Requiring a basic benefit package for all qualified health benefit plans in the Health Insurance Exchange. Of particular note, mental health and substance-use disorder treatment is included within the basic benefit package, and this coverage requirement will be extended to all health insurance plans within five years.
- Blocking insurance discrimination based on individuals' health status and pre-existing conditions.
- Requiring a public health insurance option in the Health Insurance Exchange. We are particularly pleased that the Energy and Commerce-amended bill clarifies that physician participation in the public plan is voluntary and that no penalties may be levied for not participating.
- Establishing meaningful requirements for employers and individuals to obtain qualified health insurance coverage.



- Eliminating the pending 21% reduction in the Medicare payment update while addressing the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate.
- Extending the physician fee schedule mental health add-on as enacted in the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008, as well as preserving recent advances in parity for mental health and substance-use disorder treatment.

On behalf of the members of the American Psychiatric Association Board of Trustees, I would also like to commend you, the AMA Board, and your AMA advocacy staff for the leadership you have all shown in ensuring that the AMA plays an active role in crafting meaningful solutions to the country's health insurance crisis. We are pleased to stand with you as health reform progresses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan F. Schatzberg, M.D.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alan F. Schatzberg, M.D.  
President