September 21, 2009

The Honorable Max Baucus  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Comments on the Senate Finance’s America’s Healthy Future Act of 2009

Dear Chairman Baucus:

Stand for Quality, a coalition of more than 200 organizations focused on improving the quality and affordability of health care, commends you for including in the America’s Healthy Future Act of 2009 specific proposals for strengthening the health care quality infrastructure.

We are heartened that the proposed quality provisions in the America’s Healthy Future Act of 2009 builds on many of the recommendations our coalition set forth in March 2009 in Building a Foundation for High Quality, Affordable Health Care: Linking Performance Measurement to Health Reform. We believe that reform should build on the momentum that has been generated by public-private collaborative activities already underway to promote improvement in health care quality and affordability. By building on current activities to create a sustainable infrastructure to support and improve the nation’s capacity to set priorities for quality improvement, develop new quality measures, assure that measurement is a constructive tool to foster quality improvement, and establish efficient data collection processes, we will improve care, lower costs, and achieve our shared goal of making high-quality, affordable health care available to all.

Stand for Quality appreciates your call for expanded public support for a national quality improvement strategy, coordinated priority setting, development of new measures and ensuring consultative processes to engage the full range of stakeholders in the use of measures for payment or public reporting.

A fundamental building block of virtually all of the transformative programs you have included in your draft is a robust quality enterprise capable of measuring, reporting, and improving patient care. One critical element of the quality enterprise is ensuring coordinated and consistent public-private sector data collection and aggregation. By relying on emerging health information technology we can reduce the administrative burden of data collection while improving care. In addition, fostering the development and dissemination of innovative quality improvement methodologies and strategies and providing practitioners with game-changing tools and techniques to improve practice and decision-making is critical.

www.standforquality.org
We applaud your leadership on health reform and look forward to working with you to strengthen provisions in regard to 1) further development of constructive tools to foster quality improvement, and 2) support for a robust data aggregation and collection mechanism. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any of the Steering Committee members.

Sincerely,

Stand for Quality Steering Committee

Janet M. Corrigan, Ph.D., M.B.A., President and Chief Executive Officer, National Quality Forum

Karen Ignagni, M.B.A., President and Chief Executive Officer, America’s Health Insurance Plans

Charles N. Kahn III, M.P.H., President, Federation of American Hospitals

Peter V. Lee, J.D., Executive Director for National Health Policy, Pacific Business Group on Health

Mark B. McClellan, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform and Leonard D. Schaeffer Chair in Health Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution

Rita Munley Gallagher, Ph.D., R.N. Senior Policy Fellow, American Nurses Association

Debra L. Ness, President, National Partnership for Women & Families

Nancy H. Nielsen, M.D., Ph.D., Immediate Past President, American Medical Association

Kenneth W. Porter, Senior Vice President, American Benefits Council

William L. Roper, M.D., M.P.H., Dean, UNC School of Medicine, Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs and CEO, UNC Healthcare System (Chair, National Quality Forum)

John C. Rother, Executive Vice President, Policy and Strategy, AARP

Gerald M. Shea, Assistant to the President for Governmental Affairs, AFL-CIO

John Tooker, M.D., M.B.A., F.A.C.P., Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer, American College of Physicians