

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus
511 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Dodd
448 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

October 16, 2009

Dear Majority Leader Reid, and Chairmen Baucus and Dodd:

The undersigned groups, members of the Patient and Consumer Coalition, strongly support the Physician Payments Sunshine Act provision of the America's Healthy Future Act of 2009. We strongly urge you to retain this provision in the Senate's final health care bill.

This bipartisan provision, sponsored by Senators Herb Kohl (D-WI) and Chuck Grassley (R-IA), requires that the makers of drugs, devices, biologicals and medical supplies disclose to the government the names of any physicians, or hospitals with approved medical training programs to whom they have given gifts, honoraria, consulting fees, meals, travel, entertainment, or other benefits, or who are stockholders or investors in their respective companies.

This provision will increase accountability and transparency in our health care system, and will help ensure that patient care decisions involving prescription drugs and medical devices are based on the best available science, and not on the size of financial incentives offered by drug and device makers.

The provision also is responsive to an April 2009 report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), which stated, "The public needs to be able to trust that physicians' decisions are not inappropriately influenced by their financial relationships with industry." It concluded that, "Responsible and reasonable conflict of interest policies and procedures will reduce the risk of bias and the loss of trust while avoiding undue burdens or harms and without damaging constructive collaborations with industry."

As organizations that are deeply concerned with improving the health of all Americans, we strongly support retaining the Physician Payments Sunshine Act in the Senate's final health care bill.

Sincerely,

Arthur Aaron Levin, MPH
Center for Medical Consumers

Mark Cohen
Executive Director
Government Accountability Project

Jean Silver-Isenstadt, MD, Ph.D.
Executive Director
National Physicians Alliance

Diana Zuckerman, Ph.D.
President
National Research Center for Women & Families

Judy Norsigian,
Executive Director
Our Bodies Ourselves

Terrie Cowley
President
The TMJ Association

Francesca T. Grifo, Ph.D.
Senior Scientist and Director
Scientific Integrity Program
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Larry C. McNeely II
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Kim Witzak
Woody Matters