

BLASTFAX!

Update on Federal Healthcare Reform

Last Friday, the US House of Representatives passed HR 3962, a health reform bill by a vote of 220-215. The American Academy of Pediatrics supported the passage of this bill, and while they noted the bill was not perfect, it contained several worthy provisions which will improve children's health care. Current AAP president Judy Palfrey, MD said: "While final health reform will ultimately be shaped by bills from both chambers of Congress, HR 3962 is a strong first step toward comprehensive health reform...". The Senate released its healthcare reform bill today and a vote there is expected soon.

While the Academy supports many of the provisions in the House and Senate bills, we have concerns and unaddressed issues in both bills that the AAP anticipates working out as the separate proposals move towards the final legislation. The key goals for the Academy in health care reform remain:

- Access to coverage for all children in a medical home with age appropriate benefits & comprehensive well-child services & immunizations consistent with AAP guidelines;
- Increased Medicaid payment levels to at least Medicare rates;
- Develop incentives to bolster the pediatric subspecialty workforce;
- Recognition of unique needs of children in any quality improvement initiatives.

In summary, the Georgia Chapter SUPPORTS the AAP position that health care reform is necessary because the current health care system does not serve children well. The Chapter believes strongly that we need to focus on what is right for children and not allow politics to stand in the way of achieving necessary change. We encourage you to communicate these messages to your Congressional representatives; and the Chapter will be doing likewise. It's worth noting the AAP is joined by many other national medical associations in their support for healthcare reform, including the American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Physicians (internal medicine), American Osteopathic Medical Association, and the American Medical Association.

AAP members can follow the reform efforts regularly via the AAP website at www.aap.org. Log into the Member Center and click on "Health Care Reform." If you have additional questions, feel free to contact us at the Chapter office.

In closing I leave you with these words: last year I visited Dr. Leila Denmark shortly after her 111th birthday at her home in Athens. Before I left I asked her if she had any advice for today's pediatricians. She looked right at me and said in her clear, sweet voice: "Every child deserves a chance. Do what you can to help." And then she smiled.

Avril Beckford, MD
President