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American Psychiatric Association Endorses HR3200 as Basis for Reform

ARLINGTON, Va. (September 18, 2009) – The Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association 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,” said a letter presenting the board’s decision to 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 – like any bill – is not perfect, we recognize that it offers many positive benefits for psychiatrists and other physicians, and most importantly for our patients,” the letter said.

Benefits of the bill recognized by the APA 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 percent 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.

The board also commended the AMA Board and advocacy staff for showing leadership in ensuring the APA has an active role in crafting meaningful solutions to the country’s health insurance crisis.

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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