NBCC
National Breast Cancer Coalition

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November 4, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC), I am writing to support H.R. 3962, *Affordable Health Choices for America Act of 2009* as we continue to work to ensure that we have language in the bill that would require that a significant number of educated consumers be included on all boards, commissions, and panels that will make decisions that affect our health care.

NBCC is made up of over 600 member organizations from across the country representing millions of patients, health care professionals, women, their families and friends. Our grassroots are working tirelessly to make certain that we have affordable, quality care for all.

The *Affordable Health Choices for America Act of 2009* includes components that meet or come close to many elements of the NBCC *Framework for a Health Care System Guaranteeing Access to Quality Health Care for All*, including provisions that provide guaranteed access to quality health coverage that includes a basic set of comprehensive benefits, strive to make health care affordable for all individuals and create a system that is accountable and transparent. As you know, NBCC's framework supports shared responsibility of individuals, employers and government in health care reform. In addition, we believe it is vital that the reformed system supports comparative effectiveness research to obtain and evaluate scientific evidence on various health interventions and supports efforts to control health care costs.

In June, I testified before the House Education and Labor Committee strongly supporting the House Tri-Committee draft bill's approach to health care reform and in July, NBCC endorsed H.R. 3200, the *America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009*. In October, I also testified before the House Energy and Commerce Committee in support of health care reform. At the hearing, in the NBCC endorsement letter and in our meetings on the Capitol Hill, NBCC continues to urge Congress to include language that would require that a significant number of educated consumers be included on all boards, commissions, and panels that are making decisions that will affect our health care. This includes but is not limited to entities established to review and assess the best evidence-based treatment options, their effectiveness and value, decide the level and scope of benefits packages and determine effective methods for communicating health care information to consumers, providers and plans.

Patient advocates – members of the lay public who are educated and trained – can play an integral role in ensuring that the health care system is responsive to the needs of health care consumers, of

the patients, as well as the medical and scientific communities. We appreciate that the most recent version of your bill includes changes to ensure that patient/consumer advocates have a voice on the *Health Benefits Advisory Council* and the *Comparative Effectiveness Research Commission* but we urge the House to go further to ensure that educated patient/consumer advocates have a voice by including the following language in the final House bill:

All advisory panels, boards and committees charged with decision making on any aspects of the health care system shall whenever possible include a significant number of educated patients and consumer advocates as voting members. The term 'educated consumer or patient' means an individual who is accountable to, represents and reports back to organizations that represent consumers or individuals affected by a disease or health conditions, and is knowledgeable about the health care system and has received training to make informed decisions regarding relevant health, medical or scientific matters.

We thank you for your leadership in advancing meaningful health care reform and ask that you include this language in *Affordable Health Choices for America Act of 2009.*

Since its inception in 1991 NBCC has been working toward the goal of ensuring access to affordable quality health care for all. We believe that, working together, this is the year to make it happen.

Sincerely,

Frances M. Visco
President

cc: The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader
The Honorable George Miller, Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee
The Honorable Henry Waxman, Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Charlie Rangel, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee