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OTOLARYNGOLOGY—  
HEAD AND NECK SURGERY**

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November 6, 2009

The Honorable John D. Dingell  
2328 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

On behalf of the more than 11,000 members of the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS), I would like to express our appreciation for the continued exclusion of several healthcare reform provisions in the *America's Affordable Health Choices Act* (H.R. 3962) that would seriously harm the delivery of healthcare in this country. In addition, we are encouraged that the U.S. House of Representatives is committed to permanently repealing the flawed Medicare reimbursement system, resetting the budget baseline, and working to implement a new payment model that will ensure the sustainability and stability of the Medicare system for the future. To that end, the AAO-HNS fully supports the *Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act* (H.R. 3961).

The AAO-HNS is the world's largest organization representing specialists who treat the ear, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck. The medical disorders treated by our physicians are among the most common that afflict all Americans, young and old. They include chronic ear infection, sinusitis, snoring and sleep apnea, hearing loss, allergies and hay fever, swallowing disorders, nosebleeds, hoarseness, dizziness, and head and neck cancer. We are commonly referred to as ENT physicians.

Since 2002, Congress has been forced to intervene in the last hours of each legislative year to prevent scheduled physician payment cuts from going into effect. It is our firm belief that no true healthcare reform can be achieved without concurrently replacing the current physician payment system with a new model that will provide the Medicare system with a solid foundation for the future. Failure to address this serious problem endangers the quality and availability of care for our expanding senior population.

While the AAO-HNS appreciates your recognition that provisions such as the creation of an Independent Medicare Advisory Commission (IMAC) do little to achieve quality healthcare reform, we continue to have serious concerns regarding the vast unintended consequences associated with many of the programs included in H.R. 3962. Healthcare is an intrinsically personal issue, where physicians and patients work together to make critical health decisions. H.R. 3962 creates over 100 new federal bureaucracies that will ultimately chip away at the collaborative and personal relationships that exist between patients and physicians.

The AAO-HNS is also concerned how certain funding provisions included in H.R. 3962 will impact our members, many of which are small business employers. Further, the legislation fails to include substantive, proven medical liability reforms that would help reduce rising practice expenses and the costs associated with defensive medicine.



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Achieving meaningful healthcare reform remains a priority for the AAO-HNS, and we remain committed to working towards ensuring that all Americans have access to high quality healthcare at a reasonable cost. The AAO-HNS looks forward to working with you further as the national debate on healthcare reform continues. However, we urge you to remain open to varying perspectives and proposals so we can achieve balanced reform that our nation can collectively embrace. If you would like any additional information about the AAO-HNS and/or our healthcare reform positions, please contact Megan Marcinko, Senior Manager of Congressional and Political Affairs, at 1-703-535-3796 or [mmarcinko@entnet.org](mailto:mmarcinko@entnet.org).

Sincerely,

David R. Nielsen, MD  
Executive Vice President and CEO

Cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
The Honorable John Boehner