

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Statement from American Geriatrics Society President Cheryl Phillips, MD,
Regarding AGS Board's Endorsement of Healthcare Reform

New York, NY - The American Geriatrics Society's Board of Directors expressed its strong support for the enactment of healthcare reform in a letter to President Barack Obama Friday. The board believes that numerous provisions in the reform legislation now before Congress will lead to far-reaching and lasting improvements in the quality of care provided to older Americans, and will help ensure the sustainability of Medicare.

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS) is the nation's leading membership organization for geriatrics healthcare professionals. Its mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of all older Americans. Over the past year, the AGS has had the opportunity to provide Congress with extensive comments and feedback on healthcare reform. As a result, the legislation under consideration in the Capitol will bring about much needed policy changes that, we are convinced, will result in better coordinated, higher quality and more affordable care for older adults. This legislation will also enhance geriatrics education and training and expand the capacity of the nation's healthcare workforce so it can provide high quality, efficient and affordable care that meets the unique needs of seniors nationwide.

As we noted in our letter to the President, healthcare reform *must* move forward -- so we, as a nation, can begin to address the long-term viability of the Medicare program. With healthcare costs soaring and the eldest of the nation's 77 million Baby Boomers on the brink of reaching retirement age, the sustainability of the program is in jeopardy. Waiting to address these challenges is a risk our nation cannot afford to take. Increased costs that are passed along to Medicare beneficiaries are already hurting older Americans especially those on fixed incomes. Provisions included in both the House-approved Affordable Health Care for America Act and the Senate-passed Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will help current and future Medicare beneficiaries by improving benefits, expanding access to primary and preventive care, addressing out-of-control premium increases, and extending the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund by five or more years.

We recognize that we are at an historic crossroad, and that we must not let this opportunity to reform and strengthen our nation's healthcare system slip through our fingers. We applaud the efforts of Congress and the President to improve, expand, and ensure healthcare for older Americans now and in the future.

ABOUT THE AGS

Founded in 1942, the American Geriatrics Society (www.americangeriatrics.org) is a nationwide, not-for-profit association of geriatrics health care professionals dedicated to improving the health, independence, and quality of life of all older people. The Society supports this mission through activities in clinical practice, professional and public education, research, and public policy. With an active membership of over 6,700 health care professionals, the Society has become a pivotal force in shaping attitudes, policies, and practices in geriatric medicine.