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April 2, 2009

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Baucus and Senator Grassley:

On behalf of our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 38,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) urges passage of the Senate budget resolution. We applaud your leadership and commitment to reforming our nation's health care system and stand ready to work with you and your colleagues to accomplish this task. In particular, we support the resolution's rejection of reconciliation instructions for health care reform.

In addition, we urge the Senate to accept the House budget resolution provision that includes the physician fee schedule "fix" as part of the Medicare budget baseline. To not include this provision puts physician payments at risk and would require significant reductions to already stressed health care programs.

The nation is facing very difficult economic times, and many Americans as a result are finding it harder to get the quality health care services they need. Congress must make tough choices to ensure that every American has access to health care services and the coverage necessary to pay for those services. Systemic reforms are needed to reduce costs and achieve efficiencies from which we can all benefit.

As leaders of the Senate Finance Committee, you have made your preferences clear that regular order should be followed and that true and meaningful bipartisan health care reform can happen only when reconciliation is not part of the equation. A truly bipartisan approach is needed if Congress is to have a thoughtful debate where both sides are able to fully vet and discuss all options.

Again, we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to achieve passage of bipartisan health care reform.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

