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The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chair
Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rangel:

On behalf of the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA), representing over 17,000 physicians and scientists who research, diagnose and treat disorders of the gastrointestinal tract and liver, I am writing to express our appreciation and support for several provisions in H.R. 3200, America's Affordable Health Choices Act. The AGA appreciates your leadership and shares in your goal to expand health care coverage to the uninsured, improve coordination of care, and enhance quality.

H.R. 3200 makes significant improvements to the current Medicare physician payment formula by removing physician-administered drugs from the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula and eliminating the debt accumulated from the SGR to help transition to a more viable payment system. The legislation also prevents a scheduled 21.5 percent cut to physician payments in 2010 and replaces it with a statutory update. We appreciate your recognition that meaningful system reform cannot occur if the underlying payment system remains broken and fundamentally flawed. Your proposal moves physicians out from the instability of the current SGR formula into a more stable payment system and makes significant delivery system reforms by moving physicians into a system that rewards quality and efficiency.

The AGA is also pleased that your proposal includes language that waives the coinsurance for preventive screening benefits under Medicare, like colorectal cancer screenings. We are especially grateful to you and your staff for including language that would also waive the deductible for colorectal cancer screenings regardless of whether or not a polyp or lesion is found. We believe this language will help not only clarify this confusing policy to beneficiaries, but will also help eliminate financial barriers to screenings for beneficiaries and prevent cancer. Colorectal cancer remains the second leading cancer killer but if detected early survival is greater than 90%. This proposal will help provide additional incentives for beneficiaries to access lifesaving screenings.

The legislation also makes significant improvements to the Physicians Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) by ensuring providers have access to their data in a timely manner, establishing a reasonable appeals process and extending the positive incentives for physicians to participate. The AGA continues to be actively engaged in developing evidence-based and clinically relevant quality measures for gastroenterological

conditions and providing our members with the tools to ultimately improve patient outcomes. These improvements to PQRI will continue to provide incentives for our members to participate in the program.

The AGA appreciates your leadership on improving Americans' access to affordable and quality health care and looks forward to continuing to work with you during this historic debate on health care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Sandler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "S".

Robert Sandler, MD