

September 8, 2008

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Barton
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nathan Deal
Ranking Member
Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell, Representative Barton, Chairman Pallone and Representative Deal:

We are writing on behalf of the 42 million American women living with heart disease or stroke and their families to urge you to schedule the HEART for Women Act (H.R. 1014) for a vote in the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee and full Committee in September. The HEART for Women Act is strongly supported by our organizations, and it also has strong, bipartisan support in the House of Representatives, as evidenced by the majority (226) of co-sponsors it has in the House. As you'll also recall, the Health Subcommittee held a hearing on this legislation on May 1, 2007, at which many members of the subcommittee on both sides of the aisle expressed support.

Heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases continue to be the leading killer of American men and women. As last year's hearing record laid out, a significant disparity exists in heart disease and stroke mortality between women and men, with cardiovascular diseases killing about 50,000 more women than men in 2004. Unfortunately, women are less likely than men to be referred for diagnostic tests, to receive interventional procedures such as angioplasties and stents, or to receive preventive medication. Women are also more likely than men to die within a year of their first heart attack, and women are 1.5 times more likely to be readmitted to the hospital after heart bypass surgery.

The HEART for Women Act contains a number of provisions that would help to address the cardiovascular health disparities that exist:

- Provides the public with better information about what treatments are safe and most effective for patients, depending on their sex and race or ethnicity. More specifically, the bill requires that safety and efficacy information for drugs and medical devices already being reported to the federal government be stratified by sex, race and ethnicity. This

information will help healthcare providers, researchers, and patients better understand why certain treatments work better (or worse) in some groups of people than in others.

- Expands the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WISEWOMAN program to all 50 states. The WISEWOMAN program, which is currently limited to just 14 states, provides free heart disease and stroke prevention screening to low-income, uninsured women. This program has proven to be tremendously successful in reaching those women most at risk for heart disease and stroke; in fact, 3 out of 4 of the women screened by WISEWOMAN have at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke. This program is a companion program to the CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, which is already available in all 50 states.
- Helps to raise awareness among women and their healthcare providers about their risk for heart disease and stroke. Additional education for healthcare providers is particularly important because, according to a 2004 survey of physicians by the American Heart Association, fewer than 1 in 5 doctors knew that more women than men die each year from cardiovascular disease.

Our organizations are committed to reducing the devastating impact that heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases have on women and their families. We stand ready to support your efforts to move the HEART for Women Act forward this September. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of International Aging
American Association of University Women, Pueblo Branch
American College of Cardiology
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
American Medical Women's Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Public Health Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
The Asian Pacific Islander Caucus for Public Health
Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc.
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses
Association of Women's Heart Programs
Black Women's Health Imperative
Business and Professional Women/USA
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

General Federation of Women's Clubs
Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America
Heart Rhythm Society
Latin American Health Institute
The Latino Caucus for Public Health
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Black Nurses Association
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Family Caregivers Association
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Indian Project Center
National Research Center for Women and Families
National Women's Conference Committee
National Women's Law Center
Out of Many, One
OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Papa Ola Lokahi
PHI-Health Care for Health Care Workers
San Diego State University Department of Gerontology
Society for Women's Health Research
Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes (SADS) Foundation
Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association
U.S. Forum of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, Key Women Educators
Wider Opportunities for Women
WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
Women's Research & Education Institute
YWCA USA

Cc: Rep. Lois Capps
Rep. Barbara Cubin