December 14, 2009
The Honorable Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC  20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

We are writing to support the inclusion of your amendment, No 3076, in the final Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This amendment will expand Section 4107, Coverage of Comprehensive Tobacco Cessation Services for Pregnant Women in Medicaid, to provide comprehensive cessation benefits to all Medicaid recipients.

Comprehensive cessation benefits are among the most cost-effective and efficacious preventive services available today. Tobacco cessation interventions earn an “A” grade from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, which recognizes that smoking cessation decreases the risk for heart disease, stroke and lung disease. These diseases rank among the leading causes of death and chronic disease in the United States. The Institute of Medicine and the U.S. Public Health Service also strongly endorse comprehensive cessation benefits.

Over 70 percent of people who currently use tobacco products want to quit, but they often must make multiple quit attempts before they successfully break their addiction to nicotine. Use of cessation drugs (over-the-counter or prescription drugs) and counseling can triple or quadruple cessation rates. The Medicaid population has the greatest need for access to these services. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 33 percent of adult Medicaid recipients smoke, compared to 20 percent of the general population. Currently, few states provide the full range of services needed to
help Medicaid smokers quit and some states provide no assistance at all. Not helping
these smokers quit is extremely costly to taxpayer-funded Medicaid programs –
tobacco-related healthcare costs for Medicaid programs averaged $607 million per state
in 2004.

A recent study from Massachusetts confirms the efficacy of providing comprehensive
cessation benefits to all Medicaid recipients. Smoking rates for beneficiaries in the
Massachusetts Medicaid program (MassHealth) have dropped 26% since the state
implemented its comprehensive tobacco cessation benefit in July 2006. This represents
a total of 33,000 fewer smokers. Utilization of other costly health care services also
dropped, including fewer hospitalizations for heart attacks, fewer emergency room visits
for asthma attacks and a drop in claims for adverse maternal health complications.
Massachusetts has demonstrated how lives and health care dollars can be saved when
comprehensive cessation benefits are provided to the entire Medicaid population.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act recognizes the importance of cessation
services by requiring cessation coverage benefits to Americans enrolled in group or
individual insurance plans and pregnant women in Medicaid. However, the Durbin-
Sanders amendment is needed to ensure that these important preventive services are
extended to all Medicaid recipients, who are in greatest need but can least afford these
services.

Your amendment will ensure these life-saving benefits apply to the entire Medicaid
population.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Respiratory Care
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Thoracic Society
Association for the Treatment of Tobacco Use and Dependence (ATTUD)
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Families USA
Lung Cancer Alliance
Multi-State Collaborative for Health Systems Change
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
National Latino Tobacco Control Network
National Patient Advocate Foundation
North American Quitline Consortium
Oncology Nursing Society
Oral Health America
Partnership for Prevention
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists
Society for Public Health Education
United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society