

May 22, 2009

Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We sincerely appreciate your work to provide a series of options for health care reform to improve patient care, and would like to take this opportunity to provide requested feedback on your May 14, 2009 options paper entitled, "Expanding Health Care Coverage: Proposals to Provide Affordable Coverage to All Americans."

We appreciate your work to ensure that all Americans have access to a broad range of medical benefits. However, we urge you to fully address the problem of insurance delays and denials for reconstructive surgery for children suffering from congenital or developmental deformities or disorders due to congenital anomalies, trauma, infection, tumor, or disease. Please include H.R. 1339, The Children's Access to Reconstructive Evaluation and Surgery (CARES) Act, as part of your comprehensive health care reform proposal. Senator Landrieu and others soon will reintroduce CARES in the Senate.

Children who do not have their craniofacial and other anomalies treated at an early age face long-term physical and psychological injuries. Examples of these deformities include cleft lip, skeletal deformity, skin lesions, vascular anomalies, malformations of the ear, hand, or foot, and other profound craniofacial deformities. Despite the ability of reconstructive surgical efforts to improve the outlook for these children, many times insurance companies claim that these services are "cosmetic" in nature, especially subsequent stage surgeries, leaving families the burden of how to pay for their child's treatment. A family trying to improve their child's life should not have to face the added trauma of battling their insurance company. And the federal and state insurance programs should not be left to cover the costs when private insurance had a contract to cover medically necessary treatment.

We are committed to helping these children born with facial and other deformities. Surgical procedures to correct these deformities exist and allow these children to grow up and live their lives as any other child would, free from the physical problems associated with these conditions, and free from the psychological injuries people with similar untreated deformities so often encounter. These procedures are reconstructive in nature, performed to correct abnormal structures of the body, and not cosmetic, as so many insurance companies claim.

Through your support, we can help children suffering from deformities and disfigurement to receive the treatment they need.

For these reasons, we want to work with you to ensure that these children receive the care they need. If you need any further information, please contact Lori Shoaf, Director, Federal Government Affairs, American Society of Plastic Surgeons at 202-672-1518 or lshoaf@plasticsurgery.org.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
American Association for Hand Surgery
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American College of Surgeons
American Medical Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Craniofacial Surgery
American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
The Fraternal Order of Eagles