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November 4, 2009

Hon. Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write you today to express our growing concern about the significant public health implications of unchecked climate change. In addition, we would like to schedule a time to meet with you or your staff on this important matter.

We have come together to urge you to take a strong stand for human health and the environment, based on a "Prescription for a Healthy Planet" (see below), at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December of this year.

As leading health care providers and professionals, we know that climate change is already contributing to health problems and healthcare costs. We also know that the problems and costs will grow unless we *as a nation* take a global leadership role in reducing the buildup of greenhouse gasses.

The Matter is Urgent. Climate change has potentially devastating impacts on human health here at home and around the world. The World Health Organization and the interagency U.S. Global Change Research Program both predict that unmitigated climate change will likely lead to significant increases in illness and death related to extreme heat; the undermining of air quality standards; the spread of diseases such as cholera, malaria, dengue and other infectious diseases; the compromising of agricultural production and food security; an increase in extreme weather events, and floods and droughts with dramatic impacts on human health. Overall, the health impacts of climate change will be disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable populations—the poor, the very young, the elderly and the medically infirm.

The added disease burden associated with climate change will require additional health care resources that will add to health care costs. Visionary action now to mitigate climate change will go a long way toward minimizing ill health associated with it and (avoidable) costs in the future.

We have already begun this process in our own institutions. Hundreds of American hospitals have implemented climate mitigation measures, including energy use reduction, onsite alternative energy generation, green building design and construction, along with more climate-friendly procurement, transportation, food, waste and water-use policies. With the appropriate incentives and support from the federal government, these initial efforts could become sector-wide and serve as examples for the country and the world.

We Need a Strong Global Climate Treaty. We applaud your administration for placing our country at the forefront of this international effort for the first time in years. However, we are concerned that the framework emerging from Copenhagen will not be aggressive enough to adequately confront the negative human and environmental health ramifications of climate change.

Therefore, we are calling on you and other heads of state to take a strong and visionary stand in the Copenhagen negotiations in December. We suggest your consideration of the following *Prescription for a Healthy Planet*:

Provide for Public Health: Health concerns must be taken into account in the climate negotiations. A portion of climate mitigation and adaptation funds should be targeted for the health sector to address the health impacts of climate change as well as to reduce its own climate footprint. To ensure a strong health care voice in the debate, the health care sector should also be adequately represented in the U.S. delegation to Copenhagen.

Transition to Clean Energy: A viable accord must promote solutions to the climate crisis that move away from coal, oil, gas, nuclear power, waste incineration and fossil fuel intensive agriculture. The Copenhagen treaty should foster energy efficiency as well as clean, renewable energy that improves public health by reducing both local and global pollution.

Reduce Emissions: In order to protect human and environmental health, the world's governments must take urgent action to drastically reduce worldwide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Over the next decade, developed countries must significantly reduce their emissions below 1990 levels. Developing countries must also commit to stabilizing and reducing their emissions.

Finance Global Action: A fair and equitable agreement in Copenhagen should also provide new and additional resources for developing countries to reduce their climate footprint and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Mr. President, we would like to propose a meeting to discuss how we can work together to improve the public's health and how we can support you in taking a strong stand in the Copenhagen negotiations. Your staff may contact Azibuike Akaba, at 202-553-9049, or Josh Karliner, at 415-613-5386 to discuss meeting logistics. We would be happy to provide you with any information you need to help you make a decision, and will certainly arrange to meet any scheduling needs you might have. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

<i>Affinity Health System</i>	<i>Daniel Neufelder, CEO</i>
<i>American Nurses Association,</i>	<i>Marla Weston, PhD, RN, CEO</i>
<i>American Public Health Association</i>	<i>Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (Emeritus) Executive Director</i>
<i>Ascension Health</i>	<i>Anthony R. Tersigni, President/CEO</i>
<i>Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center</i>	<i>Paul Levy, CEO</i>
<i>Bon Secours Health System, Inc.</i>	<i>Richard J. Statuto, CEO/President</i>
<i>Catholic Healthcare West</i>	<i>Lloyd H. Dean, President and CEO</i>
<i>Deirdre Imus Environmental Center for Pediatric Oncology at Hackensack University Medical Center</i>	<i>Deirdre Imus, President and Founder</i>
<i>Health Care Improvement Foundation</i>	<i>Kate J. Flynn, FACHE, President</i>
<i>Health Care Without Harm</i>	<i>Anna Gilmore Hall, Executive Director Gary Cohen, President</i>
<i>Metro Health Hospital</i>	<i>Michael D. Faas, President and CEO</i>
<i>Physicians for Social Responsibility</i>	<i>Peter Wilk, MD, Executive Director</i>
<i>Practice Greenhealth</i>	<i>Robert Jarboe, Executive Director</i>
<i>Public Health Institute</i>	<i>Mary A. Pittman, DrPH, President and CEO</i>
<i>The Center for Health Design</i>	<i>Debra Levin, EDAC President and CEO</i>

Cc: Hon. Katherine Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services

Hon. Steven Chu, Secretary of Energy

Hon. Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State

Hon. Lisa Jackson, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency

Hon. Nancy Sutley, Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality

Hon. Carol M. Browner, Director of the White House Office of Energy and Climate Change Policy

Hon. Dr. Regina M. Benjamin, U.S. Surgeon General

Hon. Rahm Emanuel, Chief of Staff White House