

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 8, 2012

Dr. Thomas R. Frieden  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30333

Re: Release of Draft Recommendations for Hepatitis C

Dear Director Frieden:

We are writing to express our thanks and strong support for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) release of the draft report, "Recommendations for the Identification of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Chronic Infection." In particular, we commend the CDC for proposing to expand its 1998 guidelines to include one-time HCV testing for all adults born between 1945 and 1965. This new approach will more effectively target the "baby boomer generation," which accounts for 80 percent of all Americans infected with chronic HCV.<sup>1</sup>

The CDC recommendations are based on a systematic review of a comprehensive body of evidence. We appreciate the hard work put into the draft report by the CDC-convened HCV Birth Cohort Testing Work Group. This report is an important step towards raising awareness around the tremendous challenges we face in helping the millions of patients, unaware of their HCV infection, get tested and linked to care.

We understand that the CDC is not the only entity taking action. Last year, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) issued two draft reports on "Screening for Hepatitis C Virus Infection in Adults" and "Treatment for Hepatitis C Virus Infection in Adults." The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) is also revisiting its current recommendation against routine screening for HCV infection in asymptomatic adults who are not at increased risk for infection.

The CDC has taken an important first step in changing the testing paradigm around HCV for the better, and improving health outcomes for millions of Americans. We strongly encourage the CDC to continue to collaborate with AHRQ and USPSTF to help ensure a complimentary assessment of the common body of evidence on HCV screening and prevention in order to avoid potential patient and provider confusion.

HCV infection is the most common long-term blood-borne infection in the United States. There are four million Americans currently infected with HCV, but 75% of these individuals are

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<sup>1</sup> Rein, DB, et al. The Cost-Effectiveness of Birth Cohort Hepatitis C Antibody Screening in U.S. Primary Care Settings. American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases. 2011.

unaware of their condition. Additionally, the prevalence of chronic infection are disproportionately higher in minority populations. For example, HCV is twice as prevalent among African Americans as among Caucasians.

Chronic HCV can result in long-term health problems, and is the leading cause of liver cancer and the most common reason for liver transplantation in the United States. Despite new treatment options that can cure the disease, the mortality rate associated with HCV has now surpassed HIV/AIDS with 15, 106 deaths attributable to the virus in 2007 alone.

For these reasons, it is imperative that the CDC take quick and decisive action in finalizing these sound, evidence-based recommendations. We thank the CDC for issuing its draft report calling for a new focus on age-based testing and for recognizing the magnitude of the public health challenge we face in the areas of HCV awareness, testing, and linkage to care.

We offer our full support for one-time HCV testing of all persons born during 1945 through 1965, and urge the CDC to issue final recommendations as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Bill Cassidy  
Member of Congress



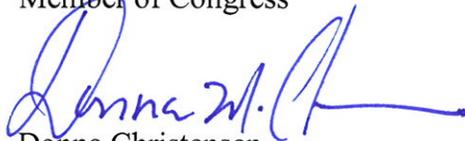
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John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress



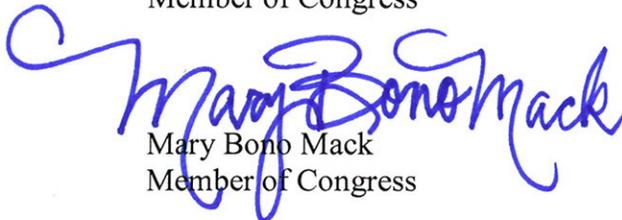
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Member of Congress



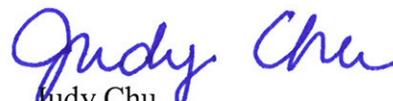
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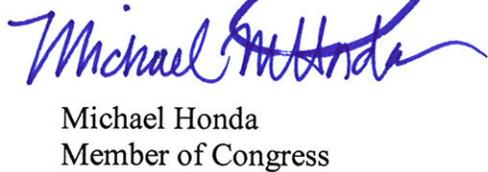
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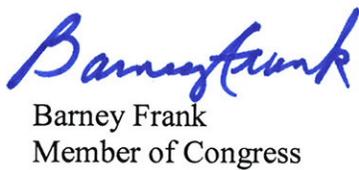
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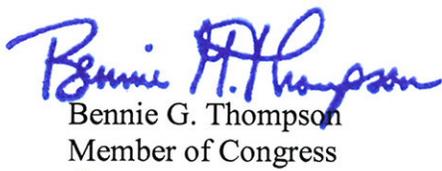
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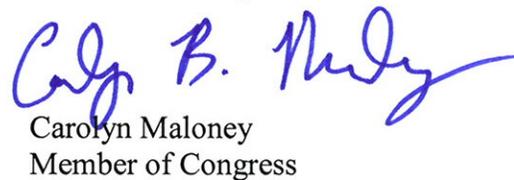
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Member of Congress



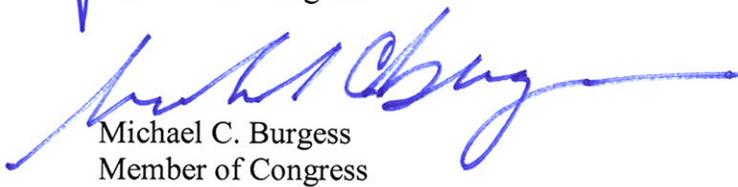
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Member of Congress



Carolyn Maloney  
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Michael C. Burgess  
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services  
Cc: Dr. Howard Koh, Assistant Secretary for Health, Department of Health and Human Services  
Cc: Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Director, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality