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August 15, 2006

Citizens' Health Care Working Group
7201 Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 575
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Members of the Working Group:

Ascension Health is privileged to have an opportunity to offer comment regarding the Citizens' Health Care Working Group's Interim Recommendations. We commend the Working Group for its diligence in seeking the thoughts and feelings of thousands of people as you explore ways for our country to provide "health care that works for all Americans."

We wish to acknowledge that one of Ascension Health's leaders has played an important role first as a member of the Working Group, and presently as its Chair. Patricia Maryland, Dr.P.H., has kept Ascension Health's leadership informed and engaged throughout the Working Group's process of hearings, community meetings and ongoing discussion. In fact, Dr. Maryland led a special session with our leadership in December 2005, detailing the Working Group's efforts and soliciting feedback from those gathered. Additionally, several of our Health Ministries were honored to serve as hosts for Citizens' Health Care Working Group community meetings held in their cities. We also are grateful to have been invited to testify at a Working Group hearing about coverage and access in May 2005, at which Anthony R. Tersigni, our President and Chief Executive Officer, described for the Working Group our passion for 100 percent access and our unique efforts around the country in support of this objective.

Because Ascension Health already has had the opportunity to share with the Working Group in a variety of settings our thoughts about 100 percent access, **we wish now to simply reaffirm our gratitude and full support for the Working Group's six Interim Recommendations.** In a particular way, three of the Working Group's recommendations are most consistent with Ascension Health's "Healthcare That Leaves No One Behind" goal of 100 percent access. **These three recommendations have our strongest endorsement:**

- **Recommendation 1: *It should be public policy that all Americans have affordable health care.***
- **Recommendation 4: *Support integrated community health networks.***
- **Recommendation 6: *Fundamentally restructure the way that palliative care, hospice care and other end-of-life services are financed and provided, so that people living with advanced incurable conditions have increased access to these services in the environment they choose.***

We wish again to express our grateful appreciation to all of the Working Group members for helping to lead this important national discussion about the future of America's

healthcare system. We believe your recommendations, when implemented by our governmental leaders, will help greatly improve access to care for millions of people.

As the Working Group moves forward in its efforts, we encourage you to contact us if we may provide further information, assistance or support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Susan Nestor Levy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "S".

Susan Nestor Levy
Senior Vice President, Advocacy
and External Relations