

February 23, 2012

Dear Member of Congress:

We are writing on behalf of the undersigned organizations and 42.7 million American women living with heart disease, stroke and other forms of cardiovascular disease to urge you to cosponsor the HEART for Women Act (S. 438/H.R. 3526). The HEART for Women Act has strong bipartisan support and has been passed by the House twice.

Heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases continue to be the leading killer of American women, causing more deaths than the next three causes of death combined and killing about 28,000 more women than men in 2008. Women are less likely than men to be referred for diagnostic tests, to receive interventional procedures such as angioplasties and stents, or to receive preventive medication. Women are also more likely than men to die within a year of their first heart attack, and women are 1.5 times more likely to be readmitted to the hospital after heart bypass surgery. Despite established hospital and physician guidelines for heart patients, women continue to be occasionally misdiagnosed by physicians and many primary care doctors still don't know that heart disease kills more women than men.

While there was a huge decline in death from heart disease in men (17.5%) in the past 30 years, it has decreased a mere 2.5% in women of all ages. One study shows the death rate from heart disease in women in ages 35-44, actually rose between 1997 and 2002. This chasm between men and women may grow even larger if disparities in the way women are treated persist.

Congress has the opportunity to make a difference for women with heart disease. The HEART for Women Act improves the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of heart disease and stroke by:

- 1. Providing gender and race-specific information for clinicians and researchers.** The legislation would require the GAO to study whether clinical trial, drug and medical device safety and efficacy data are being reported by sex, race, and age.;
- 2. Helping to prevent heart disease and stroke in at-risk women.** The legislation would authorize the expansion of the CDC WISEWOMAN (Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation for Women Across the Nation) program that provides low-income, uninsured and underinsured women in 20 states with preventive health services, needed referrals to local health care providers, and lifestyle counseling and interventions.
- 3. Reporting on care of women with heart disease or stroke.** The legislation requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to report annually to Congress on the quality of and access to care for women with heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases and to make recommendations for eliminating disparities and improving the treatment of women.

This legislation comes with a sense of urgency to close the knowledge gap that is killing so many of our mothers, sisters and daughters. Our organizations are committed to reducing the devastating impact that heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases have on women and their families

and hope you will demonstrate your support by co-sponsoring the HEART for Women Act this year. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Aging Research
Alliance for a Just Society
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American College of Cardiology
American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
American Kidney Fund
American Osteopathic Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Society of Echocardiography
The Annie Appleseed Project
Asian American Health Coalition of Greater Houston-HOPE Clinic
Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc.
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Black Women's Health Imperative
Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Delta Kappa Gamma Society International
Florida Heart Research Institute
General Federation of Women's Clubs
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc
Heart Rhythm Society
Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association (HCMA)
Lung Cancer Alliance
NAACP
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)
National Black Nurses Association
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Research Center for Women & Families
National Stroke Association
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
North American Management
OWL-The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Project Single Moms Worldwide, Inc.

Senior Moments

Society for Women's Health Research

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes (SADS) Foundation

Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association

Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Inc.

Trust for America's Health

WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women and Heart Disease

Women's Research and Education Institute