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**PRIVATE SECTOR FUNDING FOR CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION “ESSENTIAL”
SAYS COALITION FOR HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATION**

***Responses to Questions from Senate Special Committee on Aging Reinforce Value of
Combined Industry, Regulatory and Clinician Collaboration for Better Patient Care***

July 28, 2009 – While conflict of interest (COI) issues in medicine are important, the Coalition for Healthcare Communication recently recommended that the Senate Special Committee on Aging also focus its attention on how to encourage additional financial support by the healthcare industry for medical education in order to better prepare clinicians to deliver the promise of improved citizen access to primary and chronic care.

“If there is a crisis in continuing medical education (CME) today,” said John Kamp, executive director of the Coalition, “it’s the alarming drop in public and private investment in quality medical education. Our conversations with independent education providers from all sectors indicate that commercial support for CME has dropped 20 percent this year alone. Further decreases in CME funding would be harmful both to physicians and the patients they serve. . . . In the midst of the health care reform debate, let’s not be distracted by creating yet another possible cure for potential COI when real people with real medical needs are our biggest challenge.”

These comments came in a July 24 letter to Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) responding to questions about industry involvement in medical care issues in connection with a hearing today by the Senate Select Committee on Aging.

The Coalition for Healthcare Communication is dedicated to ensuring the free exchange of health information that informs and advances patient care. By supporting efforts initiated by professional education, accreditation and industry groups, the Coalition is committed to advancing health care reform by encouraging industry collaboration in doctor education, research and FDA regulated educational activities.

“The Coalition believes in robust discussion, free expression and the right of congressional committees to investigate and address these issues,” said Mr. Kamp. “But our focus today is on enabling physicians to help patients in the age of health care reform. Industry collaboration with organized medicine best advances this goal.”

The Coalition believes that the additional reporting requirements for grants for certified CME supported by self-styled reformers and some Members of Congress are not needed because multiple government, accreditation and self-regulatory guidelines already adequately address full-disclosure issues. New transparency rules would be “redundant and expensive,” said Kamp.

More information on the activities of the Coalition for Healthcare Communication can be found at: www.cohealthcom.org or by contacting John Kamp, Executive Director, at jkamp@cohealthcom.org.

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