

July 25, 2001

The Honorable John D. Dingell  
Ranking Member, Energy and Commerce Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

Consumers Union is writing in strong support of the FamilyCare Act of 2001 that moves this nation a step closer to providing universal health care coverage. We are pleased that the bill builds on existing Medicaid and SCHIP programs as a cost-effective way to expand health insurance coverage. The safety-net established in your bill will help to ensure that more families have access to affordable comprehensive health care.

Consumers Union strongly supports closing gaps that leave too many Americans uninsured and underinsured. The FamilyCare Act would be of significant benefit to this vulnerable population. First, it gives new resources to States for coverage of parents of children enrolled in SCHIP or Medicaid. The bill also allows States to expand coverage to certain legal immigrants (e.g., children, pregnant women, and parents), and allows states to expand Medicaid and SCHIP to children 19 and 20. In addition, the bill eliminates administrative hurdles through simplified and uniform application procedures for both Medicaid and SCHIP, and eliminates the assets test in Medicaid and SCHIP for parents and children.

We believe that the people addressed by the FamilyCare Act such as the parents of children enrolled in Medicaid or SCHIP are high priorities for prompt Congressional action. Furthermore, the notion of making it possible for various members of a family to enroll in the same coverage program is a strategy likely to help identify and enroll more eligible people – not only parents, but also children. By covering *families*, the program is likely to promote greater continuity of health care coverage *and* quality health care.

For all of these reasons, we applaud you for your leadership in moving this nation in the direction of universal health care coverage for families. We look forward to working with you to ensure the enactment of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

*Gail Shearer*  
Gail Shearer  
Director, Health Policy Analysis

*Janell Mayo Duncan*  
Janell Mayo Duncan  
Legislative Counsel