



March
of Dimes
Saving babies, together

*March of Dimes
Birth Defects Foundation*

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*Dr. Jennifer L. Howse
President*

Honorable John Dingell
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Dingell:

On behalf of more than 3 million volunteers and 1600 staff members of the March of Dimes, I want to commend you for introducing the "Family Care Act of 2001." The March of Dimes is committed to increasing access to appropriate and affordable health care for women, infants and children and supports the targeted approach to expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program contained in the Family Care proposal.

The "Family Care Act of 2001" contains a number of beneficial provisions that would expand and improve SCHIP. The March of Dimes strongly supports giving states the option to cover low-income pregnant women in Medicaid and SCHIP programs with an enhanced matching rate. We understand that Family Care would allow states to cover uninsured parents of children enrolled in Medicaid and SCHIP as well as uninsured first-time pregnant women. SCHIP is the only major federally-funded program that denies coverage to pregnant women while providing coverage to their infants and children. We know prenatal care improves birth outcomes. Expanding health insurance coverage for low-income pregnant women has bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.

The March of Dimes also supports Family Care provisions to require automatic enrollment of children born to SCHIP parents; automatic screening of every child who loses coverage under Medicaid or SCHIP to determine eligibility for other health programs; and distribution of information on the availability of Medicaid and SCHIP through the school lunch program. The March of Dimes supports giving states the option to provide Medicaid and SCHIP benefits to children and pregnant women who arrived legally to the United States after August 23, 1996, and to people ages 19 and 20. The National Governors Association recently endorsed this proposal as part of its legislation policy platform.

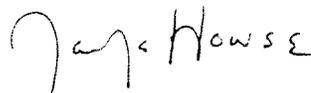
Finally, we commend you for raising issues such as the elimination of assets tests in Medicaid and CHIP for parents and children as well as providing for guaranteed continuous 12-month eligibility for parents and children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP. While controversial, we hope states would voluntarily adopt these provisions which would provide the kind of continuity that is so important for keeping families insured.

We thank you for your leadership in introducing the "Family Care Act of 2001" and are eager to work with you to achieve approval of this much needed legislation.

Sincerely,



Anna Eleanor Roosevelt
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees
Chair, Public Affairs Committee



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