



February 17, 2004

The Honorable John D. Dingell  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2383 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dingell,

On behalf of Families USA, the national advocacy group for health care consumers, I am writing to express our support for the FamilyCare Act of 2004. This legislation offers a real solution to the increasing number of uninsured by providing health insurance coverage to the parents of children enrolled in Medicaid and SCHIP, and also offers new flexibility to states to encourage additional expansions and enrollment of more Americans.

Medicaid and SCHIP play a vital role in providing comprehensive health coverage to our nation's most vulnerable citizens. According to the most recent Census Bureau report, once again, public programs - especially Medicaid - covered more people and cushioned the loss of employer-provided health insurance. Moreover, because Medicaid and SCHIP are available to low-income children up to 200 percent of poverty in most states, the number of uninsured children actually declined last year—despite private coverage losses—as public programs filled in the gap for children. But, the parents of these children did not fare quite as well. Because parents are only eligible for Medicaid if they have very low incomes in most states, only a fraction of non-elderly adults who lost private health coverage were able to enroll in Medicaid. These findings underscore the importance of protecting and expanding the Medicaid program, especially during these tough economic times when more than 43 million Americans are without health insurance. What is more, as we strive to further reduce the number of uninsured children, it is well documented that children are more likely to get enrolled and get services when their parents can get coverage, too.

The FamilyCare bill makes a significant commitment to reducing the number of uninsured in America and to getting families the vital health coverage they need. This legislation makes it easier for families to get and to keep coverage by expanding eligibility to parents of children who are already enrolled in Medicaid and SCHIP. Further, this bill allows these parents, as well as children and pregnant women, to be deemed “presumptively eligible” meaning that whole families can be enrolled in coverage together.

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Families USA thanks you for your leadership on the introduction of this important legislation, and for your continued commitment to expanding coverage to the uninsured. We look forward to working with you in to ensure that this bill become law.

Sincerely,

Ron Pollack  
Executive Director