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February 6, 2004

The Honorable John D. Dingell
House of Representatives
2338 Rayburn
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Dingell:

The National Health Law Program strongly supports the goals of the Family Care Act of 2004 and greatly appreciates your efforts with regard to the critically important matters that the Act would address. As the number of uninsured in this richest of all countries continues to climb, it is heartening to encounter a proposal that seeks to redress that shameful situation in a direct and effective way.

Reaching a broader array of people, including pregnant women, legal immigrants and more adults and children, through the highly successful and efficient Medicaid and SCHIP programs is clearly one of the most rational approaches to providing health coverage to millions of Americans who currently lack such protection. Further, making the Transitional Medical Assistance program permanent, and streamlining its administration, will guarantee that those who have worked hard to free themselves from public assistance are not left in the lurch by a precipitous loss of medical coverage. Finally, the Act would greatly enhance the ability of Medicaid and SCHIP reach their full potential by making those systems easier for applicants to negotiate. Perhaps of particular importance from the perspective of fundamental fairness is the provision that would enhance the federal match rate for language services, thus helping to insure that needy and qualified people are not turned away simply because of artificial language barriers.

In short, the Family Care Act of 2004 embodies concepts and approaches that are necessary if this country is to address the open sore that 44 million uninsured people represent. NHeLP wholeheartedly supports those concepts, and thanks you for your leadership in attempting to make them a reality. If we can be of assistance in any way in furthering this effort, please do not hesitate to contact Mara Youdelman in our Washington, D.C. office at 289-7661.

Sincerely,

Steven A. Hitov
Managing Attorney

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