



March  
of Dimes®  
*Saving babies, together.*

*March of Dimes  
Birth Defects Foundation*

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May 24, 2004

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

Dear Congressman Dingell:

On behalf of more than 3 million volunteers and 1,400 staff members of the March of Dimes, I want to thank you for re-introducing the "FamilyCare Act." As you know so well, the March of Dimes is committed to increasing access to appropriate and affordable health coverage for women, infants and children and strongly supports the targeted approach to expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) contained in the FamilyCare proposal.

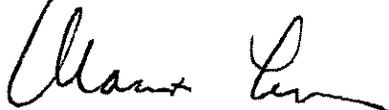
The "FamilyCare Act of 2004" includes a number of provisions to expand and improve SCHIP that are of great interest to the Foundation. In particular, we are keenly interested in the provisions that give states an enhanced matching rate and the option to cover low-income pregnant women, including uninsured first-time pregnant women. We also appreciate greatly the inclusion of uninsured parents of children enrolled in Medicaid and SCHIP. As you know, SCHIP is the only major federally-funded program that denies coverage to pregnant women while providing coverage to their infants and children. Because early and continuous prenatal care is associated with improved birth outcomes, we believe the extension of coverage to pregnant women to be especially important.

The March of Dimes also supports the FamilyCare provisions that require automatic enrollment of children born to SCHIP parents and distribution of information on the availability of Medicaid and SCHIP through the school lunch program. In addition, the Foundation supports giving states the option to provide Medicaid and SCHIP benefits to children, pregnant women and parents who arrived legally to the United States after August 23, 1996, and to individuals ages 19 and 20.

Finally, we commend you for addressing the definition of "qualified providers" as it applies to presumptive eligibility for pregnant women and for guaranteeing continuous 12-month eligibility for parents and children enrolled in these programs. These provisions are sorely needed to ensure the continuity of coverage that is so important for keeping families insured.

Thank you again for your leadership in re-introducing the "FamilyCare Act of 2004." March of Dimes volunteers and staff across the nation are eager to work with you to enact this much-needed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marina L. Weiss". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping tail.

Marina L. Weiss, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice President  
Public Policy and Government Affairs