



One State Street, Suite 102 • Providence, Rhode Island 02908 • (401) 274-0758

July 27, 2001

The Honorable John Dingell  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

The Council of Women and Infants' Specialty Hospitals (CWISH) writes to extend our enthusiastic support for the FamilyCare Act. CWISH strongly supports meaningful health insurance coverage for all pregnant women and provisions in the FamilyCare bill such as allowing states the option to expand State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) coverage to pregnant women will contribute to that goal.

CWISH is a group of eight of the nation's largest sub-specialty perinatal hospitals dedicated to the delivery of high risk obstetrical and neonatal care to mothers and their infants. Because access to risk appropriate prenatal care is known to improve the outcome of pregnancy, health insurance coverage for all pregnant women through Medicaid and SCHIP will contribute to the goal of improved health for the nation's children. In addition, a healthy pregnancy and delivery bolsters the chances for healthy childhood and can avert expensive, acute, and/or long-term care.

According to a March of Dimes study, "The Distribution of Health Insurance Coverage Among Pregnant Women, 1990-1997," despite the booming economy and recent Medicaid expansions, the number of uninsured pregnant women increased from 11% in 1990 to nearly 14% in 1997. Enactment of the FamilyCare Act, along with full-scale implementation of the current SCHIP program, will help to ensure that more pregnant women get the health insurance coverage they need.

We commend you on your leadership in promoting the health of pregnant women and infants.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Waleko, PhD  
Vice President, Patient Care Services,  
Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC Health  
System  
President, CWISH

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