



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of PUBLIC HOSPITALS and HEALTH SYSTEMS

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July 20, 2000

The Honorable John Dingell  
House Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Public Hospitals & Health Systems (NAPH) to express our strong support for the "FamilyCare Act of 2000," legislation that would give states the option to extend State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid coverage to parents of enrolled children and to other vulnerable populations.

NAPH represents more than 100 metropolitan area safety net hospitals and health systems. As safety net institutions, our members are essential providers of care to uninsured and vulnerable populations whose access would otherwise be severely limited. More than 65 percent of the patients served by these systems are either Medicaid recipients or Medicare beneficiaries; another 25 percent are uninsured.

NAPH has long been supportive of all efforts to expand access to health insurance coverage for the uninsured and to increase enrollment of this population in existing programs for which they are already qualified. Your legislation represents an important step toward achieving these goals. We are grateful for your efforts to expand these programs to ensure that all low-income Americans have access to appropriate health coverage.

We applaud your inclusion of the Community Access Program (CAP) in the bill, a program to provide grants to safety net providers at the community level to enhance collaboration and cooperation among safety net hospitals, clinics and other providers. The CAP program will assist safety net providers to develop a community-wide safety net infrastructure – including improved information systems, telecommunications, integrated networks and other collaborative initiatives. It is intended to produce a more efficient and seamless health care system for the uninsured. In addition, several other provisions of the legislation are of particular interest to our members, including those which:

- Permit coverage expansions for SCHIP parents, legal immigrant children and pregnant women, first-time pregnant women, and children through age 20;
- Simplify the application process and require states to use the same enrollment processes for SCHIP and Medicaid;
- Improve outreach and enrollment activities, including that the legislation allows additional entities to determine eligibility; provides an explicit option for presumptive eligibility in SCHIP; allows presumptive eligibility for entire families; requires every child who loses Medicaid or SCHIP coverage to be automatically screened for other avenues of eligibility;
- Make the transitional Medicaid Assistance program permanent and remove some of the burdensome requirements;
- Establish a grant program to encourage demonstrations to promote innovative expansions of health insurance coverage for the uninsured.

All of these actions are crucial to ensure that our nation's poorest and most vulnerable citizens have access to high-quality health care. We thank you for your ongoing leadership in developing legislation to assure the maintenance of the health care safety net and we look forward to working with you further to develop solutions to the problems of our nation's poor and uninsured.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry S. Gage". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" being more prominent and the last name "Gage" following in a similar style.

Larry S. Gage  
President