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The Honorable Thomas Daschle
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Daschle:

The American Academy of Neurology, the nation's largest association of neurologists with over 15,000 members, strongly supports your ardent work to protect the interests of our patients by introducing the "Patients' Bill of Rights Act of 1998", Senate S. 1890 and House H.R. 3605. This legislation is a testament of your commitment to ensuring quality health care and, most importantly, it responds to the needs and wants of our patients suffering from chronic and disabling health conditions.

We believe that since health plans have assumed the role in managing care that this requires as well as justifies the development and application of rigorous access and quality standards. Consequently, the Academy has deliberated for several months on protections that should be included in patient protection legislation. Through this process we have developed a comprehensive position paper which I am including for your information.

What we have identified as key provisions in "Bill of Rights" legislation are largely included in the legislation that you and your colleagues have introduced in both the House and the Senate and that we strongly endorse. We believe the highest priority should be given to assuring that any federal patient protection legislation include the following key provisions:

- Provisions to assure patients with chronic conditions or disabilities requiring ongoing specialty care have direct access to such specialty care either through standing referrals or use of a specialist as the principal care provider;
- Provisions that assure an internal grievance process within the plan for both patients and providers regarding decisions adverse to their interest and external appeal bodies to review final adverse decisions by the plan.
- Provisions for the establishment of an Ombudsman program at the state level to provide information and assistance to consumers with regard to enrollment and grievances and appeals processes.
- Provisions that assures the proper consideration and use of experimental and investigative treatment.
- Provisions that recommend the development of a office of managed care oversight in each state.
- Provisions that subject health plans to reasonable accountability for the services they provide as well as being subject to personal injury damage suits brought by individuals injured by decisions of plans.
- Provisions that prevent plans from penalizing providers for communications with consumers or for advocating

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The message that seems to resonate the loudest among our patients and consumers is that they want to receive quality health care that includes obtaining truthful information about their health care plan and having adequate choice of providers to choose from both inside and outside of their health plan.

The Academy will continue to monitor the progress of this legislation and it welcomes any opportunity that may exist for it to contribute to the debate and final passage of this important legislation. Please feel free to contact me or our Washington Representative, Richard Verville at 202/466-6550, if you need additional information about our position or if you would like our input on this legislation.

Thank you again for taking the lead in this important direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven P. Ringel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "S" and "R".

Steven P. Ringel, MD