

# ☆ HEALTH CARE FOR ALL COALITION ☆

March 12, 2003

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State, County and  
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Staywell Health Center  
Unitarian Society  
United Auto Workers  
University Health  
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The Honorable W.J. "Billy Tauzin  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John D. Dingell  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
3233 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Tauzin and Ranking Member Dingell:

The undersigned Connecticut organizations are extremely concerned that the state fiscal crisis is forcing many states to cut Medicaid coverage and provider payments. We are especially disturbed that Governor Rowland has written to President Bush and Secretary Thompson saying that we don't need an increased Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) in our state as is contained in the bipartisan proposal. He is turning down federal money at the same time that he is cutting off tens of thousands of people from their health care and laying off nearly 3000 state workers.

Governor Rowland states in his letter that, "Connecticut also has a proud history of meeting the health needs of our citizens ..." He talks about how we have expanded Medicaid coverage for adults with children to 150 percent of poverty, but he has just cut 23,000 of those same working parents from this program. He talks about how we have expanded our State-run pharmacy program for seniors, but he has just effectively cut access to prescription drugs for Connecticut's seniors by increasing the membership fee for this program by 20% and the co-pays by over 33%. His letter suggests that we need more flexibility in the Medicaid programs, but he is already cutting many of the "optional" Medicaid benefits that help thousands of Connecticut residents

We urge you to oppose the Bush Administration's Medicaid proposal as supported by Governor Rowland. It induces states to block grant their Medicaid programs. It also offers states the flexibility to make cuts and curtail coverage, but doesn't offer enough resources to assist states that want to meet the growing needs of their unique populations and circumstances or to try innovative approaches to expanding health coverage. With fewer federal rules, budget pressures may lead states to limit beneficiary access through waiting lists and high cost-sharing requirements. Provider payments are likely to be further squeezed. States will be tempted to use new Medicaid spending flexibility to deal with other pressing priorities, such as bioterrorism and disaster preparedness.

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# ☆ HEALTH CARE FOR ALL COALITION ☆

Medicaid cuts are a drag on our economy. Medicaid and other Connecticut programs provide health care, nursing home care and prescription drug coverage to more than 350,000 people, about 1 in 10 residents. Connecticut's Medicaid program creates over 30,000 jobs and brings in \$3.5 billion in business activity. Overall in this country, for every \$1 million that states cut from their Medicaid programs, \$3.4 million is lost from the economy.

Rather than jeopardize the Medicaid program that is the cornerstone for providing health care to our most vulnerable population, we urge you to provide immediate financial relief to your states by supporting a temporary increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP). The best way to help your state is to co-sponsor and support H.R. 816, the King-Brown State Fiscal Relief Act. Connecticut's share of this bipartisan proposal bill will bring in approximately \$71 million so that we can provide urgently needed health care services for low-income children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Vivier, Director  
Health Care for All Coalition  
On behalf of:

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Advanced Strategies to Healthcare Access (ASHA)  
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