



# AFSCME

*American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO*

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May 9, 2003

The Honorable John Dingell  
Ranking Member of Energy & Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2328 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

On behalf of the 1.4 million members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I am writing to express our strong support for the Medicare prescription drug benefit bill, H.R. 1199.

AFSCME has long supported the creation of a Medicare prescription drug benefit that is comprehensive in coverage, affordable and voluntary for all Medicare beneficiaries. H.R. 1199 guarantees affordable coverage to all Medicare beneficiaries, without having to give up the doctor they choose. And providing this benefit within Medicare – and not through private providers – means seniors can count on the coverage being there at costs determined by Medicare, not the drug companies and HMO's.

In particular, we applaud your proposal's provisions for continuous coverage. We believe that it is one of the most critical components of a meaningful prescription drug benefit. Beneficiaries must have coverage they can count on, with no gaps in coverage. Doing anything less would force our seniors to pay all prescription costs out of their own pocket when they will need the coverage the most.

We also strongly support the cost-sharing provisions in your proposal. Maintaining the same cost-sharing for the prescription drug benefit as other benefits under Medicare, as well as a reasonable cap on beneficiary spending, will make this important benefit affordable and easily understood by Medicare beneficiaries.

Also, H.R. 1199 would not put at risk those retirees who currently have some prescription drug coverage through an employer. Retiree health care is the primary source of prescription drug coverage for seniors. Your proposal rightly recognizes that important contribution and provides relief for employers that choose to continue retiree drug coverage.

We look forward to working with you and the other sponsors of this important legislation. A Medicare prescription drug benefit is long overdue, and our nation's seniors deserve no less.

Sincerely,

GERALD W. McENTEE  
International President

