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June 13, 2002

The Honorable John Dingell
U.S. House of Representatives
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

On behalf of the 1.3 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 proposal you unveiled today.

AFSCME has long supported the creation of a Medicare prescription drug benefit that is comprehensive in coverage, affordable and voluntary for all Medicare beneficiaries. We also support the inclusion of meaningful mechanisms to reduce the cost of prescription drugs for our nation's seniors, and for that matter, all Americans. We believe that your proposal meets these standards.

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.

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

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