

**American Academy of Family Physicians**

2021 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-1011

July 24, 2001

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 93,100 members of the American Academy of Family Physicians, I ask you to vote for H.R. 2563, *The Bipartisan Patient Protection Act*, introduced by Reps. Greg Ganske (R-IA), John Dingell (D-MI), Charlie Norwood (R-GA) and Marion Berry (D-AR).

The Academy supports passage of the Bipartisan Patient Bill of Rights as it comes to the House floor because it will finally guarantee patients basic protections such as a prudent layperson standard when seeking emergency medical care, as well as the banning of health plan restrictions on free communication between a physician and their patient. The Academy's members, family physicians from around the country, have consistently urged Congress to allow physicians to act as their patients' advocate. Likewise, all patients deserve access to timely and appropriate medical care. Passage of the *Bipartisan Patient Protection Act* will ensure these protections are consistently provided throughout the country and apply even to self-insured health plans that otherwise would not be subject to state oversight.

The Academy also supports the liability provisions in H.R. 2563. When health plans make benefit decisions or deny requests for needed medical care, they ought to be responsible for the harm and suffering caused to our patients. Physicians remain accountable for their clinical decision-making before state medical boards that regulate the quality of medical care and through malpractice actions brought at the state level. In the course of creating appropriate accountability for federally protected ERISA health plans, there is no reason to create the threat of increased physician liability at the federal level. H.R. 2563 ensures that treating physician could not be named in federal suits.

Please pass a strong patients' bill of rights this session.

Sincerely,

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