



July 18, 2001

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), an organization representing more than 42,000 physicians dedicated to improving women's health, the undersigned members of ACOG's Executive Board would like to set the record straight regarding direct access to obstetric and gynecologic care in various patients' rights legislation.

On June 20<sup>th</sup>, President Bush singled out his support for direct access for women to obstetric and gynecologic care. ACOG applauds the President's support for providing women this important care. However, it is important to note that only the Senate passed bill introduced by Representatives Ganske, Dingell, and Norwood would provide this guarantee.

The bill that President Bush supports, HR 2315, introduced by Representatives Ernie Fletcher (R-KY) and Collin Peterson (D-MN), does not meet the needs of American women. While the language in HR 2315 eliminates the need for a referral, it allows plans to require prior authorization for ob-gyn care. The effect is the same – delay of care.

In the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House passed a Patient's Bill of Rights that required health plans to allow women direct access to providers who specialize in obstetrics and gynecology without authorization or referrals for services, including covered follow-up care. We urge you to pass the Senate passed bill which contains the same high standard of care. Considering the past success in the House, the consensus around this issue, and the recent passage in the Senate, the Fletcher-Peterson bill represents a step backwards for women's health.

Women need ob-gyn care without the added time, expense, inconvenience, and health jeopardy of having to get a permission slip. Direct access to ob-gyn services is a fundamental patient protection that should be extended to all women enrolled in managed care plans. We urge you to support passage of the Senate passed bill sponsored by Representatives Ganske, Dingell, and Norwood—it's the right thing to do for the women of America.

We appreciate your efforts to enact a patients' bill of rights. Please do not hesitate to contact Dawn McKinney in ACOG's Government Relations Department at (202) 863-2566 for more information on this important provision.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. Purdon, MD, President  
Tucson, AZ

Charles B. Hammond, MD, President Elect  
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San Diego, CA

Ted L. Anderson, MD, Junior Fellow College Advisory Council Chair  
Nashville, TN

Gerson Weiss, MD, Representative of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology Inc.  
Newark, NJ

John R. Musich, MD, Representative of the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics  
Royal Oak, MI

Michael L. Berman, MD, Representative of the Society of Gynecologic Oncology  
Orange, CA

Ralph W. Hale, MD, ACOG Executive Vice President  
Oak Hill, VA

Gerald B. Holzman, MD, ACOG Vice President of Education  
Vienna, VA

Albert L. Strunk, JD, MD, ACOG Vice President of Fellowship Activities  
Madison, NJ