

# HIV Medicine Association

July 26, 2001

The Honorable John Dingell  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC

By facsimile

Dear Congressman Dingell:

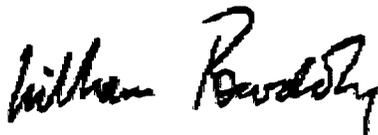
I am writing on behalf of the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) to express our support of the Ganske-Dingell Patients Bill of Rights legislation, H.R. 2563, which creates a federal minimum standard for all individuals insured through private managed care plans. HIVMA represents 2,000 physicians from 48 states actively involved in the provision of HIV care.

HIV/AIDS is a disease of significant and growing complexity. Research clearly demonstrates that clinical expertise in managing HIV/AIDS patients translates into better outcomes measured by frequency and duration of hospitalizations, number and severity of complications, and improvements in survival. Failure to appropriately treat individuals with HIV/AIDS including lapses in the continuity of treatment results in negative consequences for the individuals and the public health of the community. With these issues in mind, I have highlighted below key provisions of H.R. 2563 that we as providers of care to people with HIV/AIDS strongly support because they better ensure the delivery of quality health care to individuals living with HIV disease.

- Provisions that guarantee access to specialty care including providing access to specialists not in the health plan's network if warranted at no additional cost to the patient and requiring the availability of standing referrals to specialists for people with ongoing medical conditions
- Provisions that support continuity of care by requiring plans to give patients who are undergoing treatment for a serious and complex condition such as HIV/AIDS the option to continue coverage by a provider for up to 90 days
- Provisions that guarantee access to the appropriate prescription drugs by requiring plans to cover drugs that are not on their formulary when medically necessary and requiring the coverage of investigational drugs
- Provisions that ensure access to clinical trials by not allowing plans to deny participation in approved clinical trials and requiring coverage of routine patient costs associated with trial participation
- Provisions that protect the doctor-patient relationship by allowing physicians to advise patients on treatment options regardless of whether or not they are covered by the health plan and protecting physicians who engage in advocacy for their patients

The true test of the quality of any health plan is its ability to respond to the needs of its members who are very ill and have multiple and ongoing health needs. Thank you for your leadership in drafting legislation that protects these patients. Please feel free to contact Christine Lubinski, executive director of HIVMA, at (703) 299-5027 with questions or if we can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely yours,



William Powderly, MD  
Chair, HIV Medicine Association

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