



**American  
Association for  
Marriage and  
Family Therapy**

*Building the future  
through marriage  
and family therapy*

August 23, 1999

The Honorable Charles Norwood  
1707 Longworth Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Bipartisan Consensus Managed Care Improvement Act of 1999 (H.R. 2723)

Dear Dr. Norwood:

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy is writing to express our strong support for the Bipartisan Consensus Managed Care Improvement Act of 1999 (H.R. 2723). On behalf of the 46,000 marriage and family therapists throughout the United States, we want to applaud you and Rep. Dingell for your effort to provide Americans with comprehensive patient protections.

Your bill offers several safeguards that are integral to our members, as well as the public at large. One provision, the prohibition on discrimination against providers, has particular significance. It expands consumer access to qualified practitioners who are regulated by the states. Without this protection, insurers and plans can continue to discriminate against many licensed health care professionals. Additionally, the provision will foster competition among providers and expand the pool of trained practitioners.

The ability to access specialty care is also a positive component of this legislation. Patients with ongoing healthcare conditions will greatly benefit from the opportunity to access specialists who are trained in the treatment of their special conditions. Moreover, removing the requirement of a primary care referral will reduce costs and delays that burden health care delivery.

Other provisions of significance to our organization include: an independent review process for determination of medical necessity decisions; the ability of people with special health care needs and chronic conditions to continue to access their health care professionals after employers change plans; the ability to hold managed care plans accountable for decisions to deny care; and guaranteed access to emergency care services.

These protections are a superb example of how Members from both sides of the aisle can work together to improve the quality of medical care for all employees. Your leadership in this effort is truly outstanding and appreciated. If there is any role our organization can play in passage of this legislation, please contact our Government Affairs Manager, David Bergman, at (202) 467-5105. Its time to ensure that all Americans are provided with the security of a comprehensive health care system.

Sincerely,

*Mike Bowers*

Michael Bowers  
Executive Director  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

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