

American Psychiatric Association

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Honorable Charlie Norwood
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Norwood:

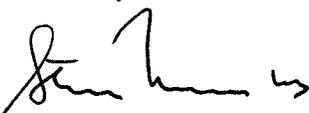
On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the medical specialty representing 42,000 psychiatric physicians nationwide, I would like to express our deep appreciation for your tireless efforts to establish basic standards of medical care for patients in managed care. Your bill, the "Bipartisan Consensus Managed Care Improvement Act of 1999" (H.R. 2723), represents the best hope for meaningful patient protection legislation in this Congress.

APA believes that the Norwood-Dingell bill is a balanced, reasonable compromise that offers meaningful patient protections without imposing undue burdens on business or the insurance industry. As you know, your bill includes key provisions such as: required offer of point-of-service; direct access to specialty care for management and treatment of chronic conditions; special protections for children; continuity of care; access to clinical trials; improved internal and external appeals with plan penalties for non-compliance; and, establishes reasonable appeal mechanisms as a condition for patients to have the right to sue health plans under state law for medical malpractice. We note with particular appreciation that your definition of "personal injury" clearly covers mental illness.

In addition to your own efforts on behalf of physicians, other health care professionals, and patients, we would also like to express our thanks to Rodney Whitlock of your staff. He has been extremely responsive to the specific concerns we have had over issues affecting our patients and continues to demonstrate outstanding staff work on your behalf.

Again, thank you for your efforts on behalf of patient protection. We welcome the opportunity to work with you for the enactment of the strongest possible legislation in the current Congress.

Sincerely,



Steven M. Mirin, M.D.
Medical Director

