

**until it's over**  
**AIDS ACTION**

June 19, 2001

The Honorable Representative John Dingell  
Ranking Member, House Energy & Commerce Committee  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building

Dear Representative Dingell,

On behalf of AIDS Action, the national voice on AIDS representing all Americans living with HIV/AIDS and the 3200 community-based organizations that serve them, I am writing to express our support for the "Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001" (H.R.526).

People with disabilities and chronic health care conditions, including people living with HIV/AIDS, are particularly vulnerable in today's changing health care market. H.R.526 will help ensure that these health care consumers have access to quality health care. The legislation establishes a number of key quality standards and other protections that are particularly important to people living with HIV/AIDS. The bill ensures quality health care for patients and consumers by requiring managed care plans to:

- Allow individuals with chronic or life-threatening illnesses to designate a specialist to serve as their primary care physician.
- Provide for "standing referrals" that let individuals see a specialist on an ongoing basis.
- Allow direct access to "out of plan" specialty care if the plan does not offer the needed service in plan.
- Ensure that enrollees have access to non-formulary prescription drugs when medically necessary (This is particularly important for people living with HIV/AIDS because of the complexity and evolving state of HIV drug treatments).
- Provide an external appeals process for individuals to challenge plan care and coverage decisions, including access to an expedited appeals process for individuals with life-threatening illnesses.
- Provide coverage for the cost of emergency care even if the care is provided by a provider or health care facility that is not part of a health plan
- Require health plans to disclose all treatment options to enrollees regardless of whether they are available through the plan.
- Prevent discrimination against plan enrollees and providers.
- Allow individuals to participate in clinical trials.
- Ban the provision of financial incentives to providers to deny care to enrollees.

AIDS Action is pleased that S.283 includes key consumer and patient managed care protections. We look forward to working with you to make the goal of quality health care through consumer and patient protections a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claudia Dawn French", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Claudia Dawn French  
Executive Director