



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION
PRACTICE ORGANIZATION

March 21, 2001

Representative John D. Dingell
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

I am writing on behalf of the 159,000 members and affiliates of the American Psychological Association to endorse the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001, H.R. 526, which you have introduced with Representative Ganske. This important legislation holds the promise of strong patient protections for all Americans with private health insurance.

It is significant that the myriad of specific protections in H.R. 526 is backed up by real, enforceable legal remedies. We believe that the right to hold health plans legally accountable is essential and is a deterrent to their negligent behavior. We are pleased that your bill does not include any federally-imposed cap on noneconomic damages, which would disadvantage children and at-home mothers who typically have minimal economic losses. We are grateful for the fact that you do not exclude legal remedies for those persons with solely mental injury, as has been done in some alternative bills.

H.R. 526 also includes the requirement that those in closed panel health plans be offered a point of service plan at the time of enrollment, enabling care outside of a network. The bill includes a pro-competitive provision banning health plans from excluding a class of providers based solely on licensure. Medical necessity decisions would be made by clinical peers in a fair and independent appeals process, moving the system away from some of its worst abuses.

Psychologists and their patients were among the first to feel the brunt of managed care interference with clinically necessary health services. We look forward to the day that your legislation passes, so that once more patients will receive the care they need. Thank you for your leadership on this vital issue.

Sincerely,

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