



Association of Tech Act Projects

1 West Old State Capitol Plaza, Suite 100
Springfield, Illinois 62701

July 24, 2001

The Honorable John Dingell
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell:

On behalf of the Association of Tech Act Projects (ATAP), we are contacting you about HR526, the current patient bill of rights legislation. ATAP strongly supports this legislation to accomplish critically needed managed care reform.

ATAP is an organization whose membership consists of state and territory Tech Act programs that work to assure access to assistive technology devices and services for individuals with disabilities. Assistive technology consists of devices which help an individual with a disability maintain or improve his or her independence and functional abilities. Many kinds of assistive technology are covered by health insurance as durable medical equipment or under other coverage categories.

HR526 provides a uniform federal floor of protections to all Americans with private health insurance. For persons with disabilities who need assistive technology, the protections will help improve access in many areas. The bill would give persons the right to choose the doctor they believe can best provide for their unique health care needs; allow access to specialists who are knowledgeable about assistive technology; ensure an expeditious and independent external review process; and hold insurers accountable when a patient is injured by the decision of an insurer, while at the same time protecting businesses from frivolous lawsuits. These are only a few aspects of the bill which would provide vital help to persons with disabilities and their families who often face roadblocks in obtaining medically necessary care through their managed care plans.

We sincerely hope that the House will be able to pass the legislative language of HR526 without changes that would weaken the measure. We are also opposed to the more restrictive Fletcher bill. Passage of HR526 would provide persons with disabilities with important tools to access the health care services in their insurance plan. We urge the House Energy and Commerce Committee and Congress to make every effort to pass this very important legislation.

Sincerely,

Diane Golden, Chair

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