



**N • A • C • H** . . . . .

June 12, 2001

The Honorable Greg Ganske  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Dingell  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Ganske:

Dear Congressman Dingell:

The National Association of Children's Hospitals (N.A.C.H.), which represents more than 100 children's hospitals across the country, strongly supports the provisions in your bill, the "Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001" (H.R. 526), which recognize children have different health and developmental needs than adults and often require pediatric expertise to correctly understand, diagnose and treat their health problems.

In particular, N.A.C.H. supports the provisions in your legislation, which:

- provide children with access to pediatric specialists,
- recognize the need for pediatric expertise in internal and external reviews of cases involving a child., and
- provide children with access to a pediatrician as a primary care provider.

The American public strongly favors such child-focused provisions. For example, a February 1999 nationwide public opinion survey conducted by Lake Sosin Snell Perry and Associates and The Tarrance Group, a bipartisan team of pollsters, found that 86 percent of adults expressed support for government policies that would "ensure children access to pediatric specialists, like pediatric heart specialists and surgeons, and to hospitals that specialize in treating children."

As adults, both individually and collectively as a society, we have a responsibility to pay special attention to the health, safety and development of our nation's children. The public clearly agrees. As the bipartisan team of pollsters noted, "...proposals leading with pediatric care have consistently tested the strongest – almost as valence terms."

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Managed care offers great promise, both to improve access to appropriate health care and to achieve sustainable health care spending. The fulfillment of this promise will depend in part on reaching agreement on minimum standards of accountability for how health plans should meet consumers' needs.

This promise is especially important for children, who can benefit so much from managed care's focus on primary and preventive care, but who also require assurance of access to pediatric specialty care services for their unique health care needs. If health problems for children are identified and corrected early in an appropriate manner, they are more likely to grow up as healthier and more productive adults.

However, given that children account for such a small part of total health care spending in the economy – less than 12 percent of personal health care spending – their needs alone will not command the economic focus of the competitive marketplace. “Children’s health is the poor stepchild in the HMO business,” says David Lansky, president of the nonprofit Foundation for Accountability (FACCT), in a December 1997 *Smart Money* article. “Kids are ignored for simple economic reasons.”

For this important reason, we appreciate your recognition of some of the special health care needs of children.

We also support other important provisions in your legislation that are important to all Americans, including children. Among them are:

- the “prudent layperson” standard for emergency care,
- the continuity of care provisions for those with chronic or disabling conditions,
- effective appeals and grievance procedures,
- prompt payment of claims,
- coverage for individuals participating in approved clinical trials, and,
- the prohibition of “gag” rules.

Thank you again for your leadership in addressing children’s unique health care needs in the context of your patients rights legislation.

Sincerely,



Lawrence A. McAndrews

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