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June 8, 2001

The Honorable John Dingell
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

We are writing to express our strong support for the clinical trials provision in the "Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001" (H.R. 526/S. 872) sponsored in the House of Representatives by yourself and Representative Ganske and in the Senate by Senator McCain, Senator Kennedy, and Senator Edwards. This legislation will greatly benefit individuals with life-threatening illnesses who choose to enroll in clinical trials.

First of all, we are pleased that the bill covers a large number of Americans—all those enrolled in private health insurance plans, individual health plans, and state and local government plans. The scope of this legislation ensures that a majority of Americans will benefit from its protections, and specifically from its coverage of the routine patient care costs of clinical trials. This is critically important, since patients will be less likely to enroll in clinical trials if these costs are not covered by their insurers. In addition, the bill preempts weaker laws at the state level concerning patient protections, but does not preempt stronger ones. Therefore, all patients covered under the bill will benefit from its coverage of routine costs of trials regardless of where they live, but they will not suffer if they live in a state that provides stronger coverage.

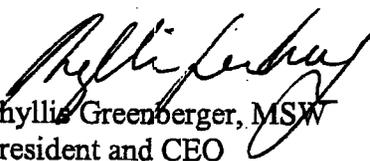
We also applaud the fact that the "Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001" covers the ancillary costs of clinical trial enrollment for all patients with life-threatening or serious diseases. By not limiting coverage to only those individuals suffering from a specific illness, the bill provides all Americans who may benefit from participating in clinical trials with the opportunity to participate in potentially life-saving research.

Finally, the bill includes coverage of routine patient costs of individuals enrolled in trials approved and funded by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Coverage of FDA-sponsored clinical trials was

not included in many previous versions of patients' rights legislation. The addition of FDA trials to those covered provides patients with access to a wider variety of trials and will therefore benefit a greater number of Americans who participate in medical research.

For over a decade, the Society for Women's Health Research has advocated to ensure the inclusion of women in clinical trials, and substantial progress has been made toward this goal. However, the ancillary costs of participation in these trials remains a barrier to many who would benefit from enrolling in this research. The "Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001" will help to make it feasible for millions more Americans with life-threatening and serious illnesses to participate in clinical trials. Therefore, we believe that this legislation will serve both to advance research and to improve the health of women and men throughout the nation.

Sincerely,


Phyllis Greenberger, MSW
President and CEO


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