



January 8, 2007

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell:

I am writing on behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA) to express our support for the Medicare Prescription Drug Pricing Negotiation Act of 2007 (H.R. 4). ANA maintains that the direct negotiation authority contained in this bill is a common-sense means of improving beneficiary access to needed prescription medications.

ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the nation's registered nurses. ANA represents RNs in all practice settings across the entire nation. America's nurses have long supported efforts to create a health care system that assures access, quality, and services at affordable costs. ANA has also historically supported the mission and philosophical underpinning of the Medicare Program. We were the first health professional association to endorse the creation of Medicare in the 1960s.

Current law expressly prohibits the Secretary of Health and Human Services from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies for lower prices for Medicare beneficiaries. This makes Medicare unique among government health programs. The Veteran's Administration and state Medicaid plans have all had great success with similar negotiations. In fact, Medicare currently pays more than 80 percent more than other federal agencies for prescription medications.

The Medicare Program has been successful in instituting price controls for medical equipment, hospital, nursing home and home health payments, and professional medical services. The lack of similar authority for prescription drugs is a glaring defect in the current Medicare prescription drug benefit. The continued overpayment for pharmaceuticals leads to higher premiums and continued access problems for Medicare beneficiaries.

America's nurses applaud your continued efforts to improve the Medicare prescription drug benefit to ensure that all beneficiaries have affordable access to all needed medications. To that end, ANA looks forward to working with you to support the Medicare Prescription Drug Pricing Negotiation Act of 2007.

Sincerely,

/s/

Rose Gonzalez, MPS, RN
Director, Government Affairs