



March 31, 1998

The Honorable John D. Dingell
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

AARP is deeply committed to assuring quality and consumer protections in managed care. We commend you for your leadership in the effort to develop effective consumer protections in managed care through legislation. It is our hope that you will continue your efforts and that meaningful bipartisan legislation that sets enforceable standards will be enacted this year.

"The Patients' Bill of Rights Act" is a good step toward assuring that Americans can rely on quality health care no matter what type of plan they use. We believe this bill includes several basic safeguards for the nation's managed care consumers. Among these are: improved access to emergency services; prohibiting "gag clauses" and providing consumers with information to make appropriate treatment decisions; and increased disclosure of information to consumers about plans, health care professionals, and facilities.

AARP is especially pleased with the attention given to the grievances and appeals process and the inclusion of both a rigorous system of internal review and an independent system of external review. An external appeals process will provide an objective review of denials, terminations, and reductions of care; and it will help to ensure that consumers have a fair and efficient process for resolving differences with their health plans and health care providers.

While your bill addresses several important standards, more will need to be done. In particular, we believe consumers would benefit from: a strong quality assurance provision that includes external review; a requirement that States choose the outside reviewing entity for external appeals; and, a meaningful framework for enforcement of national standards to assure that the rights and protections will apply to all consumers no matter what type of plan they use.

601 E Street, NW Washington, DC 20049 (202) 434-2277

Margaret A. Dixon, Ed.D. *President*

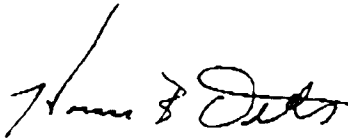
Horace B. Deets *Executive Director*



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We look forward to your continued leadership in the effort to win adoption of effective and enforceable consumer protection standards. If there is anything we can do to move the debate forward, do not hesitate to call me or have your staff call Tricia Smith or Mila Becker of our Federal Affairs Department at 202/434-3770.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Horace B. Deets".

Horace B. Deets