

NEWS RELEASE  
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**STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR WOMEN & FAMILIES IN  
SUPPORT OF THE NEW PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS ACT  
March 25, 1998**

The National Partnership for Women & Families is pleased to support the new Patients' Bill of Rights Act. For women and families, few issues resonate as profoundly and pervasively as the need for quality health care. Our new poll, *Family Matters*, found that:

Half of all Americans (47 percent) say that quality is the single most important factor when choosing a health care plan -- far more than any other factor, including cost (14 percent).

Nearly all Americans (93 percent) want health insurers to be required to meet basic quality standards. Two-thirds (66 percent) think standards should be set at the federal and state levels. Just 17 percent say that standards should be set by the marketplace alone.

Two-thirds of American women report making most of the decisions about their families' medical care. Half of women (49 percent) worry often about getting quality care for themselves or their family members.

For the millions of Americans who need health care now, and for the millions more who will need care in the future, the National Partnership for Women & Families is especially grateful to Minority Leader Daschle, Senator Kennedy, Minority Leader Gephardt, and Congressman Dingell for the steps they are taking today to ensure that our health care system delivers the high-quality care people need.

This bill will help tip the balance back in favor of consumers by establishing basic quality standards and consumer protections. Many of the bill's provisions are especially important to women. For example, managed care plans would be:

- Required to allow women to choose an ob-gyn as a primary care provider and to have direct access to ob-gyn services;
- Required to provide an external appeal when care is denied;
- Required to ensure that pregnant women can continue to see the same health care professional for the duration of the pregnancy if their provider leaves the plan or their employer changes plans;
- Required to allow health care professionals to prescribe non-formulary drugs when medically indicated;

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- Required to have an internal quality improvement system that measures performance on health care issues that affect women;
- Prohibited from discriminating against providers and enrollees on the basis of sex and other characteristics;
- Prohibited from imposing arbitrary limits on how covered services are provided; and
- Prohibited from stopping women from participating in important clinical research that may lead to life-saving cures or refusing to pay routine patient costs incurred in connection with approved clinical research.

We look forward to working with the Congress and the Administration to ensure that women and families receive the quality care they need and deserve.