



Liberty Place, Suite 700
325 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004-2802

(202) 638-1100 Phone
www.aha.org

July 21, 2000

The Honorable John Dingell
Committee on Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Dingell:

The American Hospital Association (AHA), which represents 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks, and other providers of care, is pleased to support the FamilyCare Act of 2000. The AHA shares your goal of expanding access to health care coverage for the 44 million uninsured Americans. We believe the federal budget surplus offers a unique opportunity to fund solutions to the health care problems of the uninsured.

Recent Medicaid expansions and the creation of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP) have greatly improved access to health care coverage for millions of children living in low-income families. But more needs to be done. AHA strongly supports the objective of your legislation that embraces, as one option to address the problems of the uninsured, building on existing public programs to expand coverage to the parents of the children covered by S-CHIP.

Furthermore, your provisions that include coverage for legal immigrants, improve Medicaid coverage for those transitioning from welfare-to-work, and create state grant programs to encourage market innovation in health care insurance are to be applauded. AHA believes these are good first steps toward lowering the numbers of the uninsured.

In addition to expanding public programs, AHA supports measures that make health care insurance more affordable for low-income working families. Toward that end, AHA also supports H.R. 4113, bipartisan legislation establishing refundable tax credits to assist low-income families in the purchase of health care insurance.

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Our nation's hospitals see every day that the absence of health coverage is a significant barrier to care, reducing the likelihood that people will get appropriate preventive, diagnostic and chronic care. With the uninsured growing in numbers, AHA supports your effort to build on current public programs as an important option to make it possible for more low-income families to get needed health care coverage. We thank you for your leadership and we look forward to working with you on advancing the FamilyCare Act of 2000.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Pollack". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President