

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 3, 2003

Majority Leader Tom DeLay
H-107 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Billy Tauzin
Ranking Member John Dingell
Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Michael Bilirakis
Health Subcommittee
Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Bill Thomas
Ranking Member Charles Rangel
Ways and Means Committee
1102 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairwoman Nancy Johnson
Health Subcommittee
Ways and Means Committee
1136 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Marion Berry
1113 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Conferees:

We thank you for your commitment to making Medicare a stronger, more effective program for delivering life-saving healthcare to senior citizens. We believe that an important aspect of achieving this end is to ensure that seniors have the choice of an unmanaged private fee-for-service prescription drug plan that parallels their present choice, under existing law, of the private fee-for-service option for obtaining core Medicare benefits.

We feel strongly that seniors should have access to an unmanaged prescription drug plan through Medicare Advantage (formerly Medicare+Choice) if they voluntarily choose to supplement the government Medicare contribution so as to pay for the higher premiums necessary for an unmanaged plan. At no extra cost to the government, this option allows older Americans voluntarily to spend their own money to safeguard their own lives. Accordingly, we urge you to ensure that the bill reported from conference includes the House language (the Collins Amendments) allowing this alternative.

We also agree with the Statement of Administration Policy on H.R. 1 that the bill reported from conference should "clarify that [private fee-for-service] plans that use networks, as authorized in existing law, may vary cost-sharing between network and non-network providers without obtaining explicit approval from HHS," a clarification contained in the Senate bill.

By preserving the private fee-for-service plans under Medicare Advantage and allowing them to offer an unmanaged prescription drug benefit, we will give seniors the choices and the life-saving care they deserve.

Sincerely,



Pete Sessions
Member of Congress