

**COALITION OF STATE RHEUMATOLOGY ORGANIZATIONS**

**1710 South 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Wilmington, North Carolina**

**Telephone: (910) 762-1182**

**Fax: (910) 332-1111**

**November 21, 2003**

**The Honorable William Thomas  
Chairman  
House Ways & Means Committee  
1102 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515**

**The Honorable Charles Grassley  
Chairman  
Senate Finance Committee  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510**

**Dear Chairman Thomas & Chairman Grassley:**

**On behalf of community-based rheumatologists and the patients across the nation that we treat every day, we are writing to endorse the provisions of H.R. 1, the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003. The Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations strongly supports this legislation because it fulfills the promise of Medicare to the millions of seniors who benefit from this bedrock government program through improved access to medicines that change patients' lives forever by treating rheumatoid arthritis and other crippling and disabling diseases. This legislation also allows physicians to make health care decisions based on the patients best interest.**

**Of particular importance to our Coalition and the rheumatologists we represent is the provision that reforms the Average Wholesale Price (AWP) method of determining government reimbursement for the total cost of caring for our patients. Specifically, we applaud these measures because they provide fair reimbursement for advanced, complex delivery of care while simultaneously focusing on the fundamental issues at hand: patient access to the best medicines available, and physician choice in therapy.**

**We appreciate the conference recognizing the need for structural reforms to allow non-oncology providers to be adequately reimbursed for services related to administering complex drugs and biologics. This legislation will allow continued patient access to the office-based therapies that have made a significant difference in our patient's lives. We hope to continue to work with Congress to ensure implementation of this provision in the spirit it was intended.**

**The Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO) is a grassroots organization of community-based practicing rheumatologists representing state and regional Rheumatology Societies in North Carolina, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Louisiana, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Michigan, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Iowa, South Carolina, Ohio, California, Maine, Maryland, Virginia and Arizona.**

**Senate for addressing this issue will strongly encourage Members of the House and the Senate in our states to vote for its passage.**

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Schimizzi, M.D.", written in a cursive style.

**Gregory F. Schimizzi, M.D., FACR**

**President**

**Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations**

**Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine, UNC, Chapel Hill and Coastal AHEC**