

June 12, 2003

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
H232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515-6501

Dear Speaker Hastert:

As organizations that represent patients whose healthcare needs include access to prescription medicines, we greatly appreciate your determined commitment to all Medicare beneficiaries. The Prescription Drug and Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 is of critical importance to the patient communities we serve. This legislation helps all patients who count on Medicare's promise with special assistance for those less fortunate and modernizations that will improve the health of all seniors. Moreover, it provides a means for our organizations to achieve three of our most significant goals: a voluntary prescription drug benefit to all, catastrophic protection, and real choice for patients.

Medicare prescription drug coverage must be voluntary. All Medicare beneficiaries need coverage. However, for those who prefer to stay with their current coverage, it is important that they not be forced to change.

Second, we believe new Medicare prescription drug coverage must adequately insure for high, often unanticipated prescription drug costs. Without such protection, patients with a severely debilitating illness, chronic illness or serious unexpected illness will face not only the devastation of an illness, but also the prospect of financial disaster. One promise of the Medicare program was that America's seniors and those with disabilities would be protected from impoverishing themselves to obtain health care. This legislation has succeeded in that goal.

Lastly, Medicare beneficiaries, like all patients, want and need choices. They need the ability to examine insurance plans and choose the one which best suits their needs. Patients need the ability to work with doctors in determining which treatments are best for them. We fear that reliance on a single, government-run insurance plan would also mean a single, government-determined list of acceptable treatments. We applaud you for your vision in recognizing that a "one size fits all" plan would be detrimental to America's Medicare population.

We, in conjunction with many other organizations, support this legislation because it meets the most essential conditions we believe are necessary for high-quality Medicare coverage.

**American Osteopathic Association  
Cancer Research Institute  
The ALS Association**

**The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill**  
**The National Mental Health Association**  
**Center for Patient Advocacy**  
**Friends of Cancer Research**  
**Interamerican College of Physicians and Surgeons**  
**National Patient Advocate Foundation**  
**Parkinson's Disease Foundation**  
**The Alliance for Lung Cancer Advocacy, Support and Education**  
**The Endocrinology Associates**  
**The Kidney Cancer Association**  
**The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease**  
**CapCURE**  
**The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network**  
**The Pulmonary Hypertension Association**

cc: Chairman William M. Thomas  
Chairman W.J. Tauzin