

NPAF National Patient Advocate Foundation

The Patient's Voice | since 1996

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Nancy Davenport-Ennis

CEO, President

Patient Advocate Foundation

Edward G. Connette, Esquire

Board President

Essex Richards, PA

Christian Downs, MHA, JD

Board Vice President

Executive Director

Association of Community Cancer Centers

Leah Arnett, RN, BSN, MHCA

Board Secretary

Nursing Director

University Health Services

University of Texas at Austin

John L. Murphy

Board Financial Officer

Saugenay Capital, LLC

Bruce Avery, MD

Hematology-Oncology Knoxville

Alan J. Balch, Ph.D.

Vice President

Preventive Health Partnership

Rene Cabral-Daniels, JD, MPH

Vice President of Grant Programs

Williamsburg Community Health Foundation

Richard D. Carter, Esquire

Carter & Lay

Patient Advocate Foundation

Dennis A. Gastineau, MD

Director, Human Cell Therapy Laboratory

Divisions of Transfusion Medicine & Hematology

Mayo Clinic

Venus Ginés, MA

Founder & CEO

Dia de la Mujer Latina, Inc.

The Honorable Phil Hamilton

Virginia House of Delegates

Pearl Moore, RN, MN, FAAN

CEO (Ret.)

Oncology Nursing Society

Roy Ramthun

President

HSA Consulting Services

Sheldon Weinhaus, Esquire

Weinhaus & Potashnick

SCIENTIFIC BOARD

Lori Williams, PhD, DSN[®], RN, AOCN

Chair, PAF Scientific Board of Directors

University of Texas

MD Anderson Cancer Center

David Brizel, MD

Professor

Duke University Health System

Radiation Oncology Department

Robert M. Rifkin, MD, FACP

Director, Cellular Therapeutics

Rocky Mountain Blood & Marrow Transplant Program

Rocky Mountain Cancer Centers

F. Marc Stewart, MD

Professor of Medicine, University of Washington

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

Richard L. Theriault, DO, MBA

Professor of Medicine

MD Anderson Cancer Center

HONORARY BOARD

The Honorable Mary T. Christian

Virginia House of Delegates (Ret.)

The Honorable Patrick Dougherty

Missouri State Senate (Ret.)

Paula Trahan-Rieger, RN, MSN, ACON, FAAN

Chief Executive Officer

Oncology Nursing Society

Leo Sands

Executive VP & Chief Administrative Officer

US Oncology

Doris Simonson

May 5, 2008

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Olympia Snowe
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Blanche Lincoln
United States Senate
355 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Norm Coleman
United States Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the patients we serve, National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) would like to thank you for being an original co-sponsor of S. 2795, the "*Small Business Health Options Program Act of 2008*". This legislation is a significant step forward for patients and we applaud you and your colleagues for your leadership in acknowledging that small businesses and the self-employed are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain and maintain health insurance coverage for themselves and their employees.

National Patient Advocate Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving access to healthcare services through policy reform. The advocacy activities of NPAF are informed and influenced by the experience of patients who receive counseling and case management services from our companion organization, Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF). Last year, PAF received approximately 6.8 million contacts for information or service from patients throughout the United States seeking assistance for access to care issues resulting from diagnoses of a chronic, debilitating or life-threatening disease. Of those, 44,572 became full patient cases involving communications made by PAF staff on behalf of a patient in order to reach positive resolution.

As health care costs continue to escalate, more employers, particularly small businesses, are finding it increasingly difficult to offer their employees health benefits; this is a major concern for NPAF. The SHOP Act provides additional coverage options for patients that work for a small business or are self-employed. By providing targeted tax credits and developing state purchasing pools more patients will have access to affordable health care for themselves and their families. This legislation also ensures that health plans meet minimum benefit requirements which will help ensure adequate and comprehensive care.

NPAF is concerned that this legislation falls short in protecting those with serious, life-threatening and/or debilitating disease who are often excluded from health coverage because of pre-existing conditions. NPAF urges the bill sponsors to amend the legislation and provide stronger protections to protect patients with pre-existing conditions. NPAF has

been working with other leaders in Congress on legislation that limits to a maximum of three months any pre-existing condition exclusion. Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT) and Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) have introduced companion legislation (H.R. 2833 & S. 2236) which reduces the permissible pre-existing condition exclusion periods from twelve months to three months, reduces the “look-back” period from six months to 30 days, and applies pre-existing condition protections to the individual health insurance market. (A three month pre-existing condition exclusion period is consistent with the waiting period for state-qualified health plans under the Trade Adjustment Assistance program).

NPAF is encouraged by the recognition that twelve months is far too long for patients to endure without coverage for their pre-existing condition and we look forward to working with SHOP sponsors and other health care stakeholders to expanding the bill’s protections to all health care consumers. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Amy Boivin at 202-347-8009.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Davenport-Ennis". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

Nancy Davenport-Ennis
President & CEO