July 25, 2006

The Honorable Fortney (Pete) Stark
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Stark:

Congratulations on the introduction of the AmeriCare Health Care Act of 2006, legislation which would ensure quality health care for every American.

Consumers Union, the publisher of *Consumer Reports*, strongly endorses your legislation, which ensures that every American has health insurance at least as comprehensive as Medicare. The cost of health care and the problem of obtaining stable, affordable health insurance is the most pressing consumer issue facing American families. Your legislation would at long last guarantee health security for all Americans, and that would mean a healthier America in the years to come.

We particularly appreciate the provisions in the bill which provide catastrophic out-of-pocket protection for individuals and families. By using Medicare administrative procedures and payment rates, and by using the government to negotiate for drug prices (similar to the way the VA negotiates today), we believe your bill will help slow health inflation and reduce unnecessary and unproductive administrative costs. By requiring that everyone contribute on a progressive basis to the cost of health care, your bill will stop cost shifting and help American business maintain their employer-provided health insurance.

Any family which has health insurance equal to or better than the adjusted Medicare package of benefits would, of course, be able to keep that coverage and would not be required to participate in AmeriCare. But any family that, for whatever reason, loses private coverage or is temporarily unable to afford their current coverage will know that they will always have access to quality health insurance through AmeriCare. In short, this bill will bring consumer peace of mind to all Americans.

We look forward to working with you on the enactment of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Gail Shearer
Director, Health Policy Analysis

William Vaughan
Senior Policy Analyst