

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Committee on Energy and Commerce Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman**

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#### **Dingell on House Passage of “Michelle’s Law”**

*Washington, D.C. – The following statement by Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), the Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, supports the passage of H.R. 2851, “Michelle’s Law.” This legislation would allow full-time students over the age of 18 who become severely ill to maintain their parents’ health insurance if they take a certified medical leave of absence from school.*

I rise today in support of H.R. 2851, ‘Michelle’s Law.’ This legislation protects students that are covered under their parents’ health plan from losing their health insurance if they require a medically necessary leave of absence from school.

The impetus for this legislation – and the namesake for this bill – is a young woman named Michelle Morse. She was a full-time college student at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire who was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2003. Her doctors recommended that she cut back her college course load while undergoing chemotherapy treatment. She found, however, that if she cut back her classroom hours, she would lose her health insurance because she would no longer qualify as a dependent on her parents’ health insurance plan.

She could not afford other coverage options, and she was forced to remain in school as a full-time student while undergoing fourteen rounds of chemotherapy. In 2005, she succumbed to her illness. Her mother has since lobbied for laws that would extend the definition of dependents to allow college students needing medical leaves of absence from class work to retain health insurance coverage on their parents’ policies.

I am pleased that this bill has bipartisan support. I thank Ranking Members Barton and Deal for their work as well as the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Committees on Ways and Means and Education and Labor. Special acknowledgment should also go to Congressman Hodes of New Hampshire, who has been a champion for this bill from the start.

Michelle’s Law would make a small improvement in access to health insurance for individuals who find themselves in the precarious position of being at risk of losing their insurance because they are sick. We clearly have a long way to go to eliminate the growing problem of the uninsured and under-insured, but this is a small step in that direction.

I am pleased to support this legislation and look forward to working with my colleagues to move it to the President’s desk.

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