

October 14, 2016

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Finance Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Fred Upton
Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Finance Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Energy and Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Hatch and Upton and Ranking Members Wyden and Pallone:

As organizations deeply committed to child health, we are writing to thank you for your continued leadership in supporting critical health programs that serve our nation's children and pregnant women and ask that you begin working to extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in advance of the fast-approaching funding deadline. As you know, the federal funding authorization for CHIP is currently set to expire September 30, 2017, unless Congress approves its extension.

For nearly two decades, CHIP has been a national success story, giving states the ability to provide coverage that meets the needs of families who are employed but still make too little to afford private insurance. Together, CHIP and Medicaid have helped cut the rate of children's uninsurance to the lowest level ever recorded. CHIP has a history of strong bipartisan support, most recently demonstrated with the passage of the *Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA)*.

CHIP continues to play an important role in the coverage landscape for children and pregnant women. CHIP ensures children have affordable health and dental coverage so they can access the health care they need to survive and thrive. CHIP benefits were specifically designed with children in mind, so they cover what children need. Additionally, CHIP plans offer pediatric-appropriate networks of primary care pediatricians, pediatric subspecialists, pediatric surgical specialists, and children's hospitals so children may access medically and developmentally appropriate care. Nineteen states also use CHIP to provide necessary prenatal care to pregnant women to ensure that they have healthy pregnancies and give birth to healthy infants.

If CHIP funding is not extended beyond 2017, many CHIP-enrolled children and pregnant women would likely become underinsured or uninsured altogether, which would threaten their access to care and the historic gains made insuring children over the past two decades. Thanks to the pediatric-appropriate benefits and strong cost-sharing protections in CHIP, our nation has developed a standard of comprehensive, affordable health coverage for children such that children would lose ground if funding for CHIP is not extended.

CHIP also allows states flexibility in designing their programs and provides incentives for outreach and enrollment efforts that best meet the needs of their population. This has made CHIP a popular program among state leaders. And yet, states need certainty to develop their budgets early. Most state budgets take effect in July and budget development for 2017 is already well under way. In past years when the federal CHIP funding stream was uncertain, states began implementing procedures to disenroll children and place eligible children on waiting lists well in advance of anticipated funding shortfalls. Without swift Congressional action to extend funding for CHIP that would give states fiscal certainty, millions of children and families could lose their coverage and the access to necessary health care services that CHIP coverage provides.

We encourage Congress to build on its record of improving children's coverage and remove any uncertainty about future funding for CHIP. Congress must provide long-term stability for children's health programs, giving state policymakers confidence to move forward with efforts to best meet the needs of families in their communities. Children and pregnant women must be able to rely on the coverage that has served them so well as we continue to work towards a health care system that meets *all* children's needs.

We look forward to working with Congress to maintain and strengthen CHIP and ensure that children and pregnant women have access to the health coverage they need.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO

AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families

America's Essential Hospitals

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American College of Cardiology

American College of Surgeons

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Dental Education Association

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO

American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Federation of Teachers

American Public Health Association

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Children's Defense Fund

Children's Dental Health Project

Children's Health Fund

Children's Hospital Association

The Children's Partnership

Communications Workers of America

Community Catalyst

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Delta Dental Plans Association
DentaQuest
Family Voices
Families USA
First Focus
The Jewish Federations of North America
International Assoc. of Machinists & Aerospace Workers
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement
Workers of America (UAW)
March of Dimes
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Counties
National Association of Dental Plans
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Nurses
National Coalition on Health Care
National Education Association
National Health Law Program
National Hispanic Medical Association
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nurse-Family Partnership
School-Based Health Alliance
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Union for Reform Judaism
United Way Worldwide