

January 27, 2009

Dear Senator:

As representatives of nonpartisan organizations committed to improving health care for all children, we are writing to urge your support for H.R. 2, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act, to renew the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) currently being debated before the Senate.

Since 1997, CHIP has been a vital program for low-income children in working families whose parents earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to purchase private health insurance, which now costs on average \$12,000 per year for families. By all measures, CHIP has been a success story. The children's health program has reduced the number of uninsured children in America by over one-quarter and has improved both health outcomes and access to care for millions of children across this nation. The American public recognizes that success and, in poll after poll, has expressed overwhelming support for CHIP.

Nevertheless, there are still an estimated nine million uninsured children in our nation and a shocking 6 million of those uninsured kids are already eligible but not enrolled in either Medicaid or CHIP. And, with the economic downturn, more and more families now find themselves without employer-sponsored insurance and in need of affordable coverage options for their children.

The legislation before the Senate is estimated to provide health insurance coverage to 4.1 million uninsured children across our country and over 80 percent of them are estimated to be children who are currently eligible but not enrolled. It achieves this bipartisan goal by providing states with the funds they need to sustain and strengthen their CHIP programs, including the growing number of children who need coverage in light of the recent economic downturn; financial incentives to states to enroll the eligible but not enrolled; funding for outreach and enrollment; and the ability to simplify both Medicaid and CHIP enrollment procedures and ease paperwork requirements so that children can enroll in and receive health coverage through measures such as Express Lane Enrollment.

The legislation also takes the important step of eliminating the five-year waiting period to access health care services through Medicaid and CHIP for legal immigrant children and pregnant women. The immigrant children and mothers who would no longer be required to wait five years for health care are all lawfully residing in the United States with permission to remain in the country permanently and are on a path to citizenship.

These children and mothers should not be forced to wait five years for health care, as five years is a lifetime for a child. Timely coverage can mean the difference between preventing or treating conditions that can affect a child's long-term prospects for a healthy productive life or leaving those conditions undetected and untreated.

For example, any child with asthma, autism, hearing or vision impairments, and birth defects – conditions with life-long consequences for children's health and well-being – cannot wait five

years for treatment. Any child in need of preventative or public health services, such as immunizations or treatment for infectious diseases, requires those services to be delivered in a timely manner. Also, denying or delaying children with cancer or disabilities the treatment or rehabilitative services they need is simply not what our country stands for.

As for expectant mothers, it is, by definition, nonsensical to ask them to wait five years to get the prenatal care needed to ensure the birth of a healthy newborn child.

Consequently, as organizations dedicated to ensuring that all children should have access to coverage, we urge the Senate to oppose and defeat any amendments or provisions that would:

- Impose any new coverage limitations, restrictions, or caps on coverage of children that could possibly increase the number of uninsured children or limit the ability of states to extend coverage to uninsured children in their state just as more families than ever need affordable coverage options;
- Impose any additional bureaucratic and paperwork burdens upon children that would limit access or impose barriers for them to receive the health care services they need (for example, the General Accounting Office (GAO) found that six states implementing citizen verification requirements spent \$8.3 million to find only eight ineligible immigrants in a caseload of 3.65 million people, funds that could have been used much more effectively to provide coverage for uninsured children. According to the GAO, these states have recouped a mere \$11,048 in total, less than 1 percent of the additional bureaucratic and paperwork costs, while tens of thousands of eligible U.S. citizens have lost coverage due to these new requirements); and
- Undermine efforts to simplify enrollment and outreach efforts, particularly to the millions of low-income children currently eligible for but unenrolled in Medicaid and CHIP.

We know you agree that our children are our nation's most precious resource and that investments in health care for kids reap benefits that last a lifetime. We thank you for making children's health an early priority in this Congress and urge you to stand with our children and to put their needs first and foremost in the consideration of any amendments during the forthcoming debate.

Sincerely,

Action for Children North Carolina
ADC-Michigan (Dearborn, MI)
Advocacy Center (Lafayette, LA)
AFL-CIO
AFL-CIO Community Services
Agenda for Children (LA)
AIDS Treatment Data Network (New York, NY)
Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Allegany Franciscan Ministries, Inc. (Palm Harbor, FL)

Alliance for Children and Families
Aloha United Way (Honolulu, HI)
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Pediatrics, Arkansas Chapter
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association for International Aging
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Dental Education Association
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Foundation for the Blind
American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
American Jewish Committee
American Network of Community Options and Resources
American Public Health Association
American Public Health Association—Latino Caucus
American School Health Association
Americans for Democratic Action
Anchorage’s Promise – the Alliance for Youth
The Arab-American Family Support Center (Brooklyn, NY)
Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families
Ascension Health
Asian American Justice Center
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (Oakland, CA)
Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric & Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)
Autism Speaks
Baltimore HealthCare Access (Baltimore, MD)
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Black Women for Wellness (Los Angeles, CA)
Black Women’s Health Imperative
The Boaz Community Corp.
Brain Injury Association of America
Brazilian Women's Group (Allston, MA)
California Immigrant Policy Center (Oakland, CA)
The California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN)
California Primary Care Association (Sacramento, CA)
California State Association of Counties
Carolina Peace Resource Center (Columbia, SC)
Casa Freehold (Freehold, NJ)

CATA - El Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (Glassboro, NJ)
Catholic Diocese of Shreveport (Shreveport, LA)
Center for Adolescent Health & the Law
Center for Civil Justice (Saginaw, MI)
Center for Independence of the Disabled (New York, NY)
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Center for Reproductive Rights
Child and Family Policy Center (Des Moines, IA)
Child Welfare League of America
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Children First for Oregon
Children Now
Children's Dental Health Project
The Children's Health Fund (New York, NY)
The Children's Partnership
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (New York, NY)
Coalition for New South Carolinians (Columbia, SC)
The Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies (New York, NY)
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)
Coalition on Human Needs
Coloradans For Immigrant Rights
Colorado Children's Campaign
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC) (Denver, CO)
Community Healthcare Network, NYC
Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)
Community Journal (Jackson Heights, NY)
Conexion Americas (Nashville, TN)
Consumer Action
Consumers Union
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Cover Idaho Kids Coalition (Boise, ID)
CUNY School of Law (Flushing, NY)
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
DC Coalition on Long Term Care
DC Language Access Coalition
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Docs for Tots
Easter Seals
Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC)
El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos (Albuquerque, NM)
El Pueblo/The Village (Biloxi, MS)
Empire Justice Center (Albany, NY)
Epilepsy Foundation
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)

Families USA
Family & Children's Law Center (San Rafael, CA)
Family Voices
Family Voices of NJ
Farmworker Association of Florida (Apopka, FL)
Farmworker Justice
First Focus
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center (Miami, FL)
Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (Atlanta, GA)
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition (New York, NY)
Health & Disability Advocates (Chicago, IL)
Health Care for America Now (HCAN)
Heartland Alliance
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of Chicago (HIAS Chicago) (Chicago, IL)
Highlander Research and Education Center (New Market, TN)
Hispanic Director Association of New Jersey
Housing & Community Development Network of NJ (Trenton, NJ)
Hudson Perinatal Consortium, Inc. (Jersey City, NJ)
Hudson Valley Community Coalition
Idaho Community Action Network (Boise, ID)
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) (Chicago, IL)
Illinois Primary Health Care Association (Springfield, IL)
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (Portland, ME)
Immigration Equality
Institute for Health, Law & Ethics (Concord, NH)
International Institute of the Bay Area (San Francisco, CA)
Irish Apostolate USA
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jobs with Justice
Judson Memorial Church (New York, NY)
Kentucky Youth Advocates
Khmer Health Advocates, Inc. (West Hartford, CT)
Korean American Resource & Cultural Center (KRCC) (Chicago, IL)
Korean Resource Center (KRC) (Los Angeles, CA)
La Casita: Servicios Legales de Inmigración (Trenton, NJ)
La Fe Policy Research and Education Center (San Antonio, TX)
Latina Initiative (Denver, CO)
Legal Aid Justice Center -- Immigrant Advocacy Program (Charlottesville, VA)
Legal Services of New Jersey
LSA Family Health Service, Inc. (New York, NY)
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (Baltimore, MD)
Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry in New Jersey (Trenton, NJ)
Lutheran Services in America
Make the Road New York (Brooklyn, NY)

Maryland State Association of United Ways
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Medicaid Health Plans of America
Medicaid Matters New York
Mended Little Hearts (Dallas, TX)
Mental Health America
Metro Organization for People (Denver, CO)
Metro United Way (Louisville, KY)
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Michigan County Social Services Association (Lansing, MI)
Michigan's Children
Migrant Legal Action Program
MomsRising
Muslim Consultative Network (New York, NY)
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Law and Economic Justice (New York, NY)
National Collaboration for Youth
National Council of La Raza
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcar
National Council of Urban Indian Health
National Disability Rights Network
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Health Law Program
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Immigrant Justice Center (Chicago, IL)
National Immigrant Solidarity Network
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild (Boston, MA)
National Indian Health Board
National Indian Project Center
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Latina Health Network
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families

National Respite Coalition
National Assembly on School-Based Health Care
New England Alliance for Children's Health
New Jersey Immigration Policy Network (Newark, NJ)
New Jersey State Association of Jewish Federations
New Mexico Voices for Children
New York Immigration Coalition
New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage
NJ Coalition for Battered Women
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations (Seattle, WA)
Northwest Health Law Advocates (Seattle, WA)
Northwest Missouri Central Labor Council
OCA National Center
Occupational Health Clinical Center (OHCC) (Syracuse, NY)
Out of Many, One
OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women
Papa Ola Lokahi
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
PHI-Health Care for Health Care Workers
PICO National Network
Pisgah Legal Services
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
Progressive States Network
Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PA)
Reproductive Health Access Project (New York, NY)
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Saath
Salesian Missions
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law (Chicago, IL)
School Community Health Alliance of Michigan (Okemos, MI)
SEIU
Shorefront YM-YWHA of Brighton-Manhattan Beach, Inc. (Brooklyn, NY)
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, South Central Community (Belmont, NC)
Society for Adolescent Medicine
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Health Initiative of Center for Immigrant Health
South Dakotans for Health Care Solutions
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of NJ
Summit Health Institute for Research and Education (SHIRE)
Tahirih Justice Center
Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
Tennessee Health Care Campaign
Texans Care For Children
The Arc of the United States

Union for Reform Judaism
United Cerebral Palsy
United Community Centers (Brooklyn, NY)
United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)
United Farm Workers
United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
United Neighborhood Centers of America
United Spinal Association
United Way for Southeastern Michigan
United Way in Ottawa County (Port Clinton, OH)
United Way of America
United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County (Asheville, NC)
United Way of the Bay Area (San Francisco, CA)
United Way of California
United Way of Central Iowa (Des Moines, IA)
United Way of Central Jersey (Milltown, NJ)
United Way of Central Indiana (Indianapolis, IN)
United Way of Central Ohio (Columbus, OH)
United Way of Florida (Tallahassee, FL)
United Way of Greater Cleveland (Cleveland, OH)
United Way of Greater Kansas City (Kansas City, MO)
United Way of Greater Los Angeles
United Way of Greater Portland (Portland, ME)
United Way of Greater Rochester, Rochester, NY
United Way of Greater Union County (Elizabeth, NJ)
United Way of Kentucky
United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
United Way of Missoula County (Missoula, MT)
United Way of New York State
United Way of North Carolina
United Way of Pierce County (WA)
United Way of Portage County, Inc. (Ravenna, OH)
United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County (San Antonio, TX)
United Way of Seneca County (Waterloo, NY)
United Ways of Texas
United Way of the Greater Seacoast (Portsmouth, NH)
United Way of Ventura County (Camarillo, CA)
United Ways of Washington (Spokane, WA)
United Way of Westchester and Putnam (White Plains, NY)
United Way of York County (York, PA)
USAction
Valley of the Sun United Way (Phoenix, AZ)
Virginia Poverty Law Center (Richmond, VA)
Voces de la Frontera (Milwaukee, WI)
VOICES for Alaska's Children and Youth
Voices for America's Children

Voices for Illinois Children
Voices for Ohio's Children
Voices for Utah Children
Voices for Vermont's Children
Voices for Virginia's Children
Wider Opportunities for Women
Women's Employment Rights Clinic (San Francisco, CA)
Workers' Rights Center (Madison, WI)