

September 20, 2002

Dear Senators,

We are writing to seek your support for the Children's Health Improvement and Protection Act of 2002 (S. 2860 introduced by Senators Rockefeller, Chafee, Kennedy, and Hatch) to prevent a devastating cut in the number of children receiving health coverage through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). States face a 26 percent reduction in federal funds available for fiscal years 2002, 2003, and 2004 (the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 created a dip in allocation of funds for the middle years of the program) and nearly \$3 billion in federal SCHIP funds will revert to the treasury in fiscal years 2002 and 2003. As a result, a number of states will have insufficient federal SCHIP funds available to sustain their current programs. According to the Office of Management and Budget, the result of these shortfalls will be a substantial reduction in SCHIP enrollment of 900,000 children in fiscal years 2003 to 2006. This legislation fixes the federal funding dip and preserves the availability of expiring funds that are scheduled to revert to the federal treasury.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of this issue given the remarkable gains in enrollment of uninsured children in SCHIP – in fiscal year 2001 4.6 million children were covered by SCHIP (an increase of 39 percent or 1.3 million children over the previous year). We should not let these gains in insuring uninsured children be compromised by allowing funds to expire and be lost to the program and allowing the dip in federal funding for SCHIP to extend into fiscal years 2003 and 2004.

President Bush included preservation of the expiring SCHIP funds for the program in his fiscal year 2003 budget proposal. We are appreciative of the Bush administration's recognition that these funds must be preserved. However, we believe Congress should embrace S. 2860 to preserve the expiring SCHIP funds, to target them to the states that need them, and to eliminate the dip in federal funding for the program, in order to maximize children's health coverage.

We look forward to working with the Congress to secure passage of S. 2860 this year. For more information, please feel free to contact Edwin Park at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (202-408-1080), Gregg Haifley at the Children's Defense Fund (202-662-3541), or Judy Waxman at Families USA (202-628-3030).

Sincerely,

ACORN

AFL-CIO

Alliance for Children and Families

Alliance for Retired Americans

Alliance To End Childhood Lead Poisoning

Ambulatory Pediatric Association

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association on Mental Retardation

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American Dental Education Association

American Dental Hygienists' Association

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

American Humane Association

American Jewish Committee

American Nurses Association

American Pediatric Society

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Adolescent Health and the Law
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Foundation
Church Women United
Council of Women's and Infants' Specialty Hospitals
Epilepsy Foundation
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Families USA
Family Voices
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
Legal Action Center
Lutheran Services in America
March of Dimes
Maternity Care Coalition
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of Child Advocates
National Association of Children's Hospitals
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
National Association of Social Workers
National Community Reinvestment Coalition
National Council of Churches in the USA
National Education Association
National Health Law Program, Inc.
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Mental Health Association
National Network for Youth
National Organization of Women
National Priorities Project
National PTA
National TASC (Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities)
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK
Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers
Premier
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office
Public Justice Center
Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO
Society for Adolescent Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
Society for Research in Child Development
The ARC of the United States
The General Board of Church and Society
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
UNITE (Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, AFL-CIO, CLC)

United Auto Workers
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union
United Steelworkers of America
USA Child Care
Washington Ethical Action Office, American Ethical Union
Women of Reform Judaism