

January 16, 2003

Dear Senator/Representative,

As national organizations committed to children's health care, we believe it is imperative that the 108th Congress act immediately to restore to the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) the \$1.2 billion of funds that reverted to the federal treasury at the end of fiscal year 2002 and extend the \$1.5 billion of funds that will revert at the end of the current fiscal year (FY 2003).

It is essential to preserve these funds for SCHIP to help prevent a devastating cut in the number of children receiving their health coverage through the program. A number of states will soon have insufficient federal SCHIP funds available to sustain their current programs and would have no choice but to cut enrollment. According to Office of Management and Budget data released last year, the result of these shortfalls will be a substantial reduction in SCHIP enrollment of 900,000 children between fiscal years 2003 to 2006. Analysis of the latest data from the states shows that 20 states will face federal funding shortfalls over the next several years.

In the final days of the 107th Congress, Chairman Tauzin and Ranking Member Dingell of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and then-Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley of the Senate Finance Committee developed a bipartisan consensus proposal to keep the SCHIP funds from expiring, but Congress failed to pass the measure before adjourning. We urge you to work with the House and Senate Leadership to enact this proposal expeditiously. It is the first step necessary to prevent the looming health coverage crisis that will result from insufficient federal funding of the SCHIP program.

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. We must not let these gains in insuring uninsured children be compromised by allowing \$2.7 billion in federal SCHIP funds to expire and be lost to the program.

We note that while the Tauzin/Dingell/Baucus/Grassley proposal is an essential first step in ensuring that states and uninsured children have adequate federal funding for the SCHIP program, we also urge you to support more comprehensive long-term legislation that not only increases federal SCHIP funding but also efficiently targets SCHIP funds to the states (and children) that most need them. Such legislation includes the Children's Health Improvement and Protection Act of 2002 (S. 2860), introduced by Senators Rockefeller, Chafee, Kennedy, and Hatch in the 107th Congress. That legislation represents the logical next step in ensuring that SCHIP coverage will not be dropped for nearly a million children.

We look forward to working with the Congress to quickly preserve these essential funds for the millions of children who would otherwise be uninsured without the SCHIP program. For more information, please feel free to contact Edwin Park at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (202-408-1080) or Gregg Haifley at the Children's Defense Fund (202-662-3541).

Sincerely,

ACORN
Adapted Physical Activity Council
AFL-CIO
Afterschool Alliance
Alan Guttmacher Institute
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 for Health Education
American Association of Health Plans
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association of School Administrators
American Association on Mental Retardation
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Dental Education Association
American Dental Hygienists' Association
American Ethical Union
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Federation of Teachers
American Humane Association
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress Commission for Women's Equality
American Medical Women's Association
American Nurses Association
American Pediatric Society
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
AMERIGROUP
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Center for Adolescent Health and the Law
Center for Women Policy Studies
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Child Advocacy Office, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Foundation
Children's Health Fund
Church Women United
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Coalition on Human Needs
Communications Workers of America
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
Consumers Union
Council of Women's and Infants' Specialty Hospitals
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Families USA
Family Voices
General Board of Church and Society
Inclusion Research Institute
International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Labor Project for Working Families
Legal Action Center
Lutheran Services in America

March of Dimes
McAuley Institute
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
NA'AMAT USA
National Advocacy Center for the Sisters of the Good Shepard
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Alliance of Black School Educators
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
National Association of Children's Hospitals
National Association of Commissions for Women
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Counties
National Association of Developmental Disabilities Councils
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Caucus of State Legislators
National Black Policy Association
National Center on Poverty Law
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Coordinating Committee for Multiemployer Plans
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
National Council of La Raza
National Council on Family Relations
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Education Association
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Health Law Program
National Indian Child Care Association
National Mental Health Association
National Network for Youth
National Partnership for Women and Families
National PTA
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
PACE International Union
Premier
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office
Public Justice Center
Rebecca Project for Human Rights
Research Institute for Independent Living
RESULTS
School Social Work Association of America
Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO
Society for Adolescent Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
Society for Research in Child Development
STAND for Children
Teaching Strategies, Inc

The ARC
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
UNITE
United Auto Workers
United Cerebral Palsy Association
United Church of Christ Council for Health and Human Service Ministries
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union
United Way of America
Wider Opportunities for Women
Women Employed
Women of Reform Judaism, The Federation of Temple Sisterhoods
Women's Business Development Center
Women's Missionary Society, African Methodist Episcopal Church