



Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

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July 25, 2007

Representative Jay Inslee
403 Cannon Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4701

Dear Representative Inslee:

Jay

As we move toward the goal of ensuring all eligible children have health care coverage, I am writing to express the Washington State Labor Council's support for a clean and strong SCHIP reauthorization. I am specifically requesting that you work to ensure that the Children's Health Improvement Program is passed in a timely manner, that SCHIP reauthorization legislation is fully funded and that it includes policies that will support Washington's efforts to cover all children by 2010.

As a member of the Energy and Commerce committee, I am confident that you will use your committee position to provide leadership on behalf of the 73,000 uninsured children in Washington.

I am certain you know that the inclusion of the "qualifying states" provision in the SCHIP Senate Finance Committee mark-up is a welcome relief for Washington State. Washington has been penalized since 1997 for being a leader in covering kids' health care. Including the "qualifying states" provision in SCHIP Reauthorization will end this penalty. This will allow Washington to maximize its use of federal funding to ensure that every Washington child has health care. Please do all that you can to make sure that this permanent funding fix is part of SCHIP reauthorization in the House as it is in the Senate's committee version.

We have been encouraged by efforts in the House Energy and Commerce Committee to introduce a bill that includes the full \$50 billion budget allocation. This amount will allow Washington and other states to maintain current coverage levels, support expansion plans, and reach out to the estimated six million children who are currently eligible, but not yet enrolled in either SCHIP or Medicaid. We urge you to support these efforts for full funding in the House reauthorization bill.

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Also, there are two other elements of SCHIP reauthorization that are important for our state:

1. Please support the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) to provide SCHIP coverage to lawfully present immigrant children in the U.S. awaiting citizenship. Current SCHIP law denies lawful immigrant children eligibility for SCHIP and Medicaid for five years. This unfair exclusion contributes to the growing disparity in health outcomes between children of color, and white children. Providing health coverage for these children is a smart investment. We ask that you work with your colleagues in the Energy and Commerce committee to ensure that the removal of this "five-year bar" is a part of SCHIP reauthorization.
2. Please end the federal requirement of citizenship verification for Medicaid. This unnecessary rule is costing Washington taxpayers millions of dollars and is preventing eligible U.S. citizens from accessing health coverage.

Over the past ten years, SCHIP has provided children, who would otherwise have been uninsured, with a vital source of comprehensive health insurance. Reauthorization of SCHIP offers Congress a historic opportunity to come together once again – on a bipartisan basis for the nation's children – to build on SCHIP and Medicaid's remarkable successes. We urge you to take advantage of this chance to benefit future generations of Americans.

Sincerely,



Rick S. Bender
President

RSB:jh
09/25/07