



# Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

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August 1, 2007

## Support the State Children's Health Insurance Program

Pass the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act, H.R. 3162

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), the nation's oldest, largest, and most diverse civil and human rights coalition, we are writing to urge you to support H.R. 3162, the Children's Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act, which would reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) while also improving the quality and efficiency of the entire health care system. SCHIP has significantly improved children's access to health care, and has made great strides in covering racial and ethnic minority children. The House bill will continue and expand on that record.

Together, SCHIP and Medicaid have reduced the uninsured rate among all children, playing an especially significant role in minority communities. After the inception of SCHIP, the uninsured rate for Latino children dropped by nearly one-third, from a high of 30 percent to 21 percent. For African-American and Asian and Pacific Islander children, the uninsured rate dropped by half: from 20 to 12 percent and from 17 to 8 percent, respectively. Medicaid and SCHIP help children obtain vital screening and prevention services that allow them to stay healthy and grow to be productive adults.

Despite SCHIP's success, nine million children remain uninsured, more than five million of whom are racial and ethnic minorities. The inclusion of an additional \$50 billion over five years will provide coverage to approximately 5.1 million more children, an important start toward ensuring that all children have access to health care. By contrast, President Bush's proposal to increase SCHIP funding by \$5 billion over five years would not even be sufficient to keep pace with increased medical costs, and would have the unacceptable result of decreasing the number of children covered by several hundred thousand.

The inclusion of the Legal Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (LICHIA) in the CHAMP Act also represents a significant step forward. Under current law, newly arrived immigrants face a five-year bar from receiving federal health benefits under Medicaid or SCHIP. LICHIA would restore Medicaid and SCHIP benefits to lawfully present immigrant children and pregnant women. Many states already spend their own money to provide safety net programs for low-income immigrants. Allowing states to use some federally funded services toward that goal would bring significant fiscal relief to states and would give them the flexibility to better address the needs of their populations.

The CHAMP Act also includes provisions that will benefit all people by improving the overall quality and efficiency of the health care system. The Act would create a non-profit organization to develop and promote consensus-based quality measures and advance the use of electronic health records; establish a commission to promote objective research comparing drugs and other

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treatments for specific conditions to determine which are the most effective; and promote better understanding of racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

As the nation's leading civil rights coalition, we are committed to children's health care and strongly believe that the major improvements and increased funding in H.R. 3162 are crucial. The bill's costs are in line with the House's 2008 budget resolution and are properly offset.

We hope that the House continues its tradition of bipartisan support for the important and effective SCHIP program. We thank you for considering our views and hope that you will support the CHAMP Act to continue our nation's great progress in covering more uninsured, low-income children. Please contact Nancy Zirkin, at (202) 263-2880, or David Goldberg, program manager and special counsel, at (202) 466-0087, if you would like to discuss SCHIP or any other issues.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson  
President and CEO

Nancy Zirkin  
Vice President and Director of Policy