

ACP

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*

September 25, 2007

Honorable Max Baucus
Chair
Senate Finance Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Baucus:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians, I am pleased to offer our endorsement of the House-Senate agreement on reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). ACP is the nation's largest medical specialty society, representing 124,000 internal medicine physicians and medical students. We believe that it is essential that this legislation be enacted and signed into law by President Bush. We strongly support the provisions to increase federal taxes on tobacco products as a principal means of funding the program. Raising tobacco taxes to provide coverage for the 6.6 million children currently enrolled in SCHIP and cover an additional 4 million children not only makes for good budget policy, but good health policy, since higher taxes on tobacco have been shown to reduce the number of children and adolescents who start smoking and reduce long-term costs associated with smoking-related illnesses.

Enactment of the House-Senate agreement on SCHIP is essential to preserving access to health care for vulnerable children from low-income families. At the same time, it is essential that Congress promptly act to preserve and improve access to care for Medicare beneficiaries, by enacting legislation to (1) replace pending physician payment cuts with at least two years of positive updates, paid for in a fiscally responsible way that does not result in deeper cuts (and required budget offsets) in later years, (2) authorizing a nationwide demo of the patient-centered medical home and (3) making improvements in Medicare coverage for preventive and mental health services. We urge you to seek a House-Senate agreement on a bill that includes these essential Medicare improvements as the top legislative priority immediately following passage of the SCHIP bill.

Sincerely,



David C. Dale, MD, FACP
President