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September 25, 2007

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman
Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell:

On behalf of the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law—the national leading legal-advocacy organization representing children and adults with mental disabilities— I would like to offer our strong support for the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (H.R. 976) to reauthorize and expand SCHIP. We fully share your goal of extending critical health insurance to additional low and moderate income children and the supporting provisions included in the compromise bill.

We also would like to commend you for ending the discriminatory and restrictive limits placed on mental health services faced by children enrolled in SCHIP by establishing mental health parity in H.R. 976. As you well know, without access to needed mental health care, children are placed at risk for a host of adverse outcomes, including school failure, contact with juvenile justice and even suicide.

Additionally, we are extremely pleased by the moratorium language in the compromise bill for rehabilitative services and school based services under Medicaid. This approach is critically needed at this time to safeguard intensive community based services needed by children and adults with mental disabilities.

Thank you again for crafting this significant piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Director, Federal Relations