

House Democrats Introduce Legislation To Expand Health Care Coverage to Millions of Children

House Democratic leaders introduced legislation to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program, which provides health insurance currently for more than 7 million children. This legislation will protect coverage for those children and expand it to include an additional 4 million children who would otherwise be uninsured.

"As our nation moves deeper into a recession, millions of American families are joining the ranks of the uninsured," said Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee Chairman Pallone. "For the last two years, President Bush blocked our efforts to strengthen SCHIP, but change is coming to Washington. This week, the House should once again show its commitment to ensuring more Americans have access to affordable and quality health care by passing legislation that will reach 11 million American children."

"I am very proud that our first health care bill being considered in the new Congress and with a new President is to ensure health coverage to vulnerable children," said Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Waxman. "The legislation will provide states with sufficient funding to continue their current SCHIP programs as well as to expand them to reach 4 million more low-income uninsured children. It also makes one important improvement by allowing states, at their option, to end the 5-year waiting period for low-income, uninsured children who are legal residents. This is far from health care reform, but it is a necessary start."

"The current economic crisis makes reauthorization of this program essential," said Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Emeritus Dingell. "Americans are losing their jobs at alarming rates and the CHIP program will be there to ensure our nation's children don't fall through the cracks. In my home state of Michigan it is expected that unemployment will rise to 11.3 percent in 2009. There is no doubt that this will only increase the number of children without health insurance, which currently stands at 142,000 children. It is clear that the time to act is now. Reauthorization of the CHIP program is a great first start as we begin our work on reforming the nation's healthcare system."

"I cannot think of a better investment in the future of our great nation than the health of our children," said Ways and Means Committee Chairman Rangel. "Extending the Children's Health Insurance Program is not only good policy, it also offers an important opportunity to

build bipartisan consensus on a critical issue.

Congressional passage and swift enactment by President-elect Obama will demonstrate that change has come to Washington and that we are moving forward to improve economic security and quality of life for American families struggling during these hard times."

"I am proud to join with my colleagues to introduce this SCHIP improvement legislation," said Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Chairman Stark. "With a new President, we can and should quickly enact this legislation to help millions of children maintain their health coverage, a step made all the more important by the failing economy. I am also pleased that this bill includes a provision to finally close a loophole allowing physicians to self-refer to hospitals they own. These arrangements increase health expenditures, destabilize community hospitals by pulling profit centers out of them, and potentially endanger patients' lives."

CHIPRA has been endorsed by numerous organizations, including AARP, the National Association of Children's Hospitals, and the National Governors Association.

Bill Summary: Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA)

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