

Chairman Dingell at the Subcommittee on Health hearing entitled, "Covering the Uninsured Through the Eyes of a Child"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH HEARING
ENTITLED "COVERING THE UNINSURED
THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD "
February 14, 2007

Today's hearing is about a critical and straightforward subject, health care for kids. It has been eight years since the Committee addressed this issue, and it is overdue.

The fact is, we know how to provide health care for children in a cost-effective way. Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP, have been remarkably successful programs. Today, more than one out of every four children receives health care through these programs.

This year, the State Children's Health Insurance Program will mark a decade since its enactment. Its success story is that six million children are no longer without health insurance.

But more needs to be done. Today, 7 out of 10 uninsured children eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP are not enrolled. We must give States the tools and the financial incentives to reach those children. In doing so, we can make significant headway toward ensuring health care for children in low and moderate income families.

Now is the time to reauthorize the program and build on its success. Many may question whether we can afford to do so, however, the real question is can our Nation afford not to do it.

The President has provided us with a road map leading us in exactly the wrong direction. His FY2008 Budget proposal only preserves one-fifth of the half million children who are expected to lose coverage over the next five years. Coverage for pregnant women, parents, and other adults is at risk under his budget, as well.

The evidence is clear: Covering parents helps increase coverage of children. We know that providing health care to pregnant women improves birth outcomes. Providing health care now will prevent greater costs down the road.

I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses. They will not only report on what S-CHIP has done well, but also what can be done better. This is important as we focus on ensuring the youngest among us receive the health care they need

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