

## Dingell, Clinton Announce Initiative to Expand Access to Healthcare Coverage to All Children

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### NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Dingell, Clinton Announce Initiative to Expand Access to Healthcare Coverage to All Children  
Children's Health First Act Introduced Today in  
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Washington, D.C. — Today Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) announced that they have introduced in both chambers of Congress the Children's Health First Act, a major legislative initiative aimed at providing all children with access to quality, affordable healthcare coverage. This bill includes incentives for states to expand children's healthcare and identify and enroll uninsured kids that already qualify for coverage under existing public programs but are not enrolled.

"This legislation has the potential to improve the lives of millions of children," said Dingell. "It's a disgrace that, in a country that spends \$1.9 trillion on healthcare, nearly nine million children are without health insurance. With this bill, we can maximize opportunities for children to receive the care they need to stay healthy. It's time for Congress to act to protect the most vulnerable among us — our children."

"I was proud to help create the State Children's Health Insurance Program during the Clinton Administration and I am proud today to take another important step forward for our children," said Senator Clinton. "Making health care accessible and affordable for all children will keep kids healthy, save lives, control costs, and end heartache and worry for so many parents. This plan is practical and fiscally responsible — it will honor our values and prevent kids from needing more costly healthcare in the future."

Nearly two-thirds of uninsured children are in low-income families and more than half are in working families. These children are more likely to be sick and less likely to receive care for health problems. Untreated illnesses and injuries can have lifelong consequences, put children at greater risk for both hospitalization and death, and lead to increased healthcare costs later in life.

Reverend Heyward Wiggins, leader in the PICO National Network and pastor in Camden, New Jersey, joined with Dingell and Clinton in calling for expanded healthcare coverage for children. "For the faith community that PICO represents covering all children is a simple moral requirement that no politician can ignore," said Wiggins.

The Children's Health First Act allows States to expand children's health coverage to families up to 400 percent of the Federal poverty level (which is \$70,000 for a family of three) through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and receive increased Federal payments.

It also provides States with the tools and resources necessary to identify and enroll the six million children who, though eligible for existing coverage programs, are not enrolled.

This legislation offers a new affordable coverage option for both families and employers by allowing them the opportunity to buy health insurance coverage through SCHIP. And it provides new incentives to strengthen and protect employer-sponsored coverage, something more than 50 percent of children enjoy today.

Under the Children's Health First Act, States would be able to provide affordable new coverage options, including

the option to offer coverage to older children. States could also offer coverage to legal immigrant children and would have new incentives to offer coverage to pregnant women.

To prevent future funding shortfalls like those currently facing a number of states, the Children's Health First Act would provide future SCHIP funding based upon prior year spending indexed each year by medical inflation and a State's child population growth.

[Read the Full Summary and Additional Information on the Legislation](#)

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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