

Chairman Dingell at the Subcommittee on Health hearing titled, "Covering Uninsured Kids: Reversing Progress Already Made"

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH HEARING TITLED, "COVERING UNINSURED KIDS: REVERSING PROGRESS
ALREADY MADE"
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I thank Chairman Pallone for calling this hearing to provide the opportunity for the Committee to hear State perspectives on current issues relating to children's health programs.

We are pleased to have before us today five Governors representing different regions and political perspectives. I am especially pleased to welcome back a former member of this committee, Governor Strickland from Ohio.

The Governors joining us today will provide valuable insights into the importance of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid, and the efforts of their States to reduce the number of children who do not have health insurance.

However, storm clouds threaten to undermine the progress that States have made in recent years. The Administration has taken a number of actions over the last year that directly impede State coverage efforts.

The Administration's "August 17th directive" will affect at least 26 states by this summer, causing States to roll back existing coverage and stop planned expansions.

While this directive is couched in rhetoric about helping the poorest first, the Administration's own actions make clear that is not its real intent. If this Administration were interested in helping those with the lowest income, the President would not have vetoed the bipartisan Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) that provided new incentives, tools, and bonus payments to make sure States got the job done — not to mention \$35 billion over the next 5 years to make sure that States had sufficient funding to meet the growing need for SCHIP.

And, if the August 17th directive wasn't enough, the President's budget proposes to go one step further, stopping States from covering children in families with annual incomes above \$35,200.

As the infomercial would say, wait: there's more. The six Medicaid regulations the Administration has issued in the past year would cut more than \$13 billion from Medicaid. These cuts would come from critical services for people with disabilities, such as rehabilitation and case management services, as well as from public institutions that serve as the safety net for the most vulnerable of our society.

In the face of these cuts, many States will choose to do the right thing, and use State-only funding to protect coverage for those in need. But, States cannot and should not bear this burden alone.

When both Medicaid and SCHIP were created, the Federal Government was a full partner, and it should remain so.

Moreover, with the country facing an economic downturn, it is unclear how long States can sustain their commitment if the Administration continues to erode Federal assistance to States.

This Congress will work to restore the ability of States to cover uninsured children in need. We will press forward with the good policies included in the SCHIP reauthorization vetoed by the President twice so that SCHIP is fully funded and States have the resources to meet the growing need for coverage. And we will work to stop this Administration's assault on health coverage for children.

I look forward to the testimony of today's witnesses and to working with the Governors to protect SCHIP and Medicaid programs.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce
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