

September 18, 2007

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As representatives of nonpartisan organizations committed to improving health care for all children, we are writing to urge your support for the bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) that is currently being negotiated on Capitol Hill. Since 1997, SCHIP has been a vital program for low-income children in working families whose parents earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to purchase private health insurance. With only weeks to go before the program expires, we urge you to work with Congress and to approve the final agreement that is sent to your desk. Literally, millions of uninsured children are relying on you to sign SCHIP reauthorization into law so that they are able to keep their health coverage.

As you know, SCHIP has strong bipartisan roots – it was enacted by a Republican-led Congress and signed into law by a Democratic President – and that tradition of bipartisanship continues today. The legislation approved in both the House and the Senate has strong support from Senators, Representatives, Governors and Mayors on both sides of the aisle and from an overwhelming majority of the public, who, in poll after poll, strongly support SCHIP reauthorization.

We understand that there are a broad range of perspectives on how best to assure that our nation's children are able to get the health care and coverage they need. However, by all measures, SCHIP has been extremely successful in reducing the number of uninsured children in America. Since 1997, SCHIP has helped to reduce the number of uninsured children by one-third. Nevertheless, there are still 9 million uninsured children in our nation and a shocking 6 million of those uninsured kids are already eligible under current law for SCHIP or Medicaid.

While the bills passed by the House and Senate have differences, both pieces of legislation achieve the mutual goals of Congress, the Governors, and your Administration – targeting resources where they are most needed and ensuring that the children of low-income working parents – most of whom are hourly wage earners who are not offered employer-sponsored health coverage – do not slip through the cracks. As passed, both bills would make major strides in reducing the numbers of uninsured children by providing coverage to well over three million children, most of whom are currently eligible but unenrolled in SCHIP or Medicaid. We expect that any agreement reached by conferees would similarly improve coverage for these vulnerable children.

In an effort to address some of the concerns voiced by lawmakers throughout the floor debate, it is important to note that neither of the bills approved in the House or the Senate raises the poverty level at which children can become eligible for SCHIP. And, the vast majority of children in SCHIP receive coverage through private sector health plans, just as senior citizens do in Medicare Advantage and Medicare prescription drug plans, which your Administration wholeheartedly supports, and just as you receive through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP).

We appreciate your previous support for and recognition of the importance of improving SCHIP enrollment. We were heartened by the campaign pledge you made at the Republican National Convention in 2004: "America's children must also have a healthy start in life. In a new term, we will lead an aggressive effort to enroll millions of poor children who are eligible but not signed up for the government's health insurance programs. We will not allow a lack of attention, or information, to stand between these children and the health care they need." At this critical time, and with the interests of the children in mind, we urge you keep your campaign promise to make progress toward reducing the number of children who are eligible for coverage but not currently enrolled in SCHIP or Medicaid.

Public opinion is nearly unanimous that no child in America should go without medical care because they lack access to coverage. A recent national poll commissioned by First Focus and performed by GOP strategist and pollster Frank Luntz, found that 90 percent of Americans believe that every child in America has a right to basic healthcare, with 83 percent of Americans who support renewing SCHIP before the legislation expires in September. In addition, by a ratio of 66 -17 percent, American voters say they are less likely to reelect their Senator or Congressman in the next election if they fail to support legislation aimed specifically at reducing the number of uninsured children in America.

We know you agree that our children are our nation's most precious resource and that investments in health care for kids reap benefits that last a lifetime. We urge you to stand with our children and to put their interests ahead of the partisan rhetoric that is threatening a timely SCHIP reauthorization. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you and to work with you on this and other initiatives to be sure that all of our nation's children have access to the health care services and coverage they need.

Sincerely,

First Focus
Alexandria, VA

National Association of Community Health Centers
Bethesda, MD

AARP
Washington, DC

Action for Children North Carolina
Raleigh, NC

African American Health Alliance
Dunkirk, MD

AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families
Washington, DC

AIDS Institute
Washington, DC

Alliance for Children and Families
Washington, DC

Alliance for Excellent Education
Washington, DC

Alliance for Retired Americans
Washington, DC

Aloha United Way
Honolulu, HI

Ambulatory Pediatric Association
McLean, VA

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Washington, DC

American Academy of Family Physicians
Washington, DC

American Academy of Nursing
Washington, DC

American Academy of Pediatrics
Washington, DC

American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter
Englewood, CO

American Academy of Pediatrics, Iowa Chapter
Iowa City, IA

American Academy of Pediatrics, Pennsylvania Chapter
Media, PA

American Academy of Pediatrics, Rhode Island Chapter
Cranston, RI

American Association of People with Disabilities
Washington, DC

The American Association of University Women of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
Washington, DC

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
Washington, DC

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Washington, DC

American Counseling Association
Alexandria, VA

American Dental Education Association
Washington, DC

American Dental Hygienists' Association
Chicago, IL

American Diabetes Association
Alexandria, VA

American Health Quality Association
Washington, DC

American Heart Association
Washington, DC

American Humane Association
Denver, CO

American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)
Alexandria, VA

American Music Therapy Association
Silver Spring, MD

American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)
Alexandria, VA

American Nurses Association
Silver Spring, MD

American Psychiatric Association
Arlington, VA

American Psychotherapy Association
Springfield, MO

American Public Health Association
Washington, DC

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Rockville, MD

AMERIGROUP Corporation
Virginia Beach, VA

Anchor House, Inc.
Seymour, IN

Anchorage's Promise
Anchorage, AK

Anchorage School District Superintendent, Carol Comeau
Anchorage, AK

Victoria Shaver, Director
Anchorage Youth Development Coalition
Anchorage, AK

The Arc of the United States
Washington, DC

Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness
Phoenix, AZ

Ascension Health
St. Louis, MO

Association for Children of New Jersey
Newark, NJ

Association for Community Affiliated Plans (ACAP)
Washington, DC

Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Berkeley, CA

Association for Utah Community Health
Salt Lake City, UT

Association of American Indian Affairs
Rockville, MD

Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU)
Tysons Corner, VA

Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP)
Washington, DC

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric & Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)
Washington, DC

Atlanta 9to5
Atlanta, GA

Autism Society of America
Bethesda, MD

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Washington, DC

The Black Children's Institute of Tennessee (BCI)
Nashville, TN

Boys & Girls Clubs Alaska
Anchorage, AK

Boys & Girls Clubs of South Valley
Murray, UT

Cabell County Family Resource Network
Huntington, WV

Catholic Charities USA
Alexandria, VA

Catholic Health Association of the US
Washington, DC

Catholic Healthcare West
San Francisco, CA

The Cave Institute
Bethesda, MD

Centene Corporation
St. Louis, MO

Center for Civil Justice
Saginaw, MI

The Center for Community Solutions
Cleveland, OH

Center for Law and Social Policy
Washington, DC

Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Washington, DC

Center for Public Policy Priorities
Austin, TX

Central County United Way
Hemet, CA

Chicago Foundation for Women
Chicago, IL

The Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, Oregon Health and Science
University
Portland, OR

Child and Family Policy Center
Des Moines, IA

Child Care, Inc.
New York, NY

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)
Arlington, VA

Children First for Oregon
Portland, OR

Children Now
Oakland, CA

Children's Action Alliance
Phoenix, AZ

Children's Alliance
Seattle, WA

Children's Defense Fund
Washington, DC

Children's Defense Fund Minnesota
St. Paul, MN

Children's Dental Health Project
Washington, DC

The Children's Health Fund
New York, NY

The Children's Partnership
Washington, DC

Children's Service Society of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT

CHRISTUS Health
Irving, TX

Church & Society of Christ United Methodist Church
Salt Lake City, UT

Clinical Social Work Association
Seattle, WA

Coalition for Community Schools
Washington, DC

Coalition of Religious Communities
Salt Lake City, UT

Coalition on Human Needs
Washington, DC

Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Denver, CO

Colorado Children's Campaign
Denver, CO

Colorado Community Health Network
Denver, CO

Colorado Council of Churches
Denver, CO

Colorado Fiscal Policy Institute
Denver, CO

Colorado Medical Society
Denver, CO

Colorado Organization on Adolescent, Pregnancy, Parenting, and Prevention (COAPPP)
Denver, CO

Colorado Progressive Coalition
Denver, CO

Communities In Schools, Inc.
Alexandria, VA

Community Action New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM

Community Action Partnership
Washington, DC

Community Action Partnership of Oregon (CAPO)
Salem, OR

Community Health Care Association of New York State
New York, NY

Community Service Society of New York
New York, NY

Connecticut Association for Human Services
Hartford, CT

Connecticut Legal Services
Middletown, CT

Connecticut Voices for Children
New Haven, CT

Consumer Health Coalition
Pittsburgh, PA

Consumers Union
Washington, DC

Corona-Norco United Way
Corona, CA

Council of Women's and Infants' Specialty Hospitals
Providence, RI

Council for Exceptional Children
Arlington, VA

Covering Kids & Families of Indiana, Inc.
South Bend, IN

CWA Local 2202
Virginia Beach, VA

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
Bethesda, MD

Delta Dental Plans Association
Oak Brook, IL

Denver Area Labor Federation
Denver, CO

DePelchin Children's Center
Houston, TX

Disability Rights Wisconsin
Milwaukee, WI

The Dove Center, a Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Shelter and Program
St. George, UT

Early Intervention Research Institute
Logan, UT

Easter Seals
Washington, DC

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Washington, DC

Every Child By Two
Washington, DC

Families USA
Washington, DC

Family Connection Center
Clearfield, UT

Family Promise – Salt Lake
Salt Lake City, UT

Family Voices
Albuquerque, NM

Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
Rockville, MD

The Forum for Youth Investment
Washington, DC

Foster Care Alumni of America
Alexandria, VA

Fourth Street Clinic/Wasatch Homeless Health Care, Inc
Salt Lake City, UT

Front Range Economic Strategy Center
Denver, CO

Generations United
Washington, DC

Greater Hartford Legal Aid
Hartford, CT

Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services
Los Angeles, CA

Health Action New Mexico
Bernalillo, NM

Health Care for All
Bernalillo, NM

Health Care for All Massachusetts
Boston, MA

Health Partners
Philadelphia, PA

Healthy Teen Network
Washington, DC

Healthy York Network
York, PA

Herndon Alliance
Seattle, WA

HIV Medicine Association
Arlington, VA

The Human Development Commission
Caro, MI

Illinois Action for Children
Chicago, IL

Illinois Primary Health Care Association
Springfield, IL

Immunization Action Coalition
St. Paul, MN

Intermountain Pediatric Society, Utah Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Salt Lake City, UT

International Hearing Society
Livonia, MI

Iowa/Nebraska Primary Care Association
Urbandale, Iowa

Kalamazoo County Poverty Reduction Initiative
Kalamazoo, MI

Kansas Action for Children
Topeka, KS

Legal Aid Society of Salt Lake
Salt Lake City, UT

Louisiana Maternal and Child Health Coalition
Baton Rouge, LA

The Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families
Baton Rouge, LA

Maine Association for Infant Mental Health
Greene, ME

Maine Children's Alliance
Augusta, ME

Maine Equal Justice Partners
Augusta, ME

March of Dimes
White Plains, NY

Maternal and Child Health Access
Los Angeles, CA

Maternity Care Coalition
Philadelphia, PA

Medicaid Health Plans of America
Washington, DC

Medicare Rights Center
New York, NY

Mental Health America
Alexandria, VA

Mental Health America of Hawai'i
Honolulu, HI

Mental Health Association in South Carolina (MHASC)
Columbia, SC

The Mental Health Association in Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah

Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
Lansing, MI

Michigan County Social Services Association
Lansing, MI

Michigan's Children
Lansing, MI

Midvale City Mayor, JoAnn B. Seghini
Midvale, UT

Missouri Primary Care Association
Jefferson City, MO

Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church
Denver, CO

Mountain Youth Services
Sylva, NC

National Assembly on School-Based Health Care
Washington, DC

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
Washington, DC

National Association for the Education of Young Children
Washington, DC

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders
Highland Park, IL

National Association of Children's Hospitals
Alexandria, VA

National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
Washington, DC

National Association of School-Based Health Centers (NASBHC)
Washington, DC

National Association of School Psychologists
Bethesda, MD

National Association of Social Workers
Washington, DC

The National Center for Children in Poverty
New York, NY

National Community Action Foundation
Washington, DC

National Congress of American Indians
Washington, DC

National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
Rockville, MD

National Council of Jewish Women
New York, NY

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
Washington, DC

National Council on Urban Indian Health
Washington, DC

National Disability Rights Network
Washington, DC

National Education Association
Washington, DC

National Foster Care Coalition
Washington, DC

National Foster Parent Association
Gig Harbor, WA

National Health Law Program
Washington, DC

National Healthy Start Association
Washington, DC

National Hispanic Medical Association
Washington, DC

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Washington, DC

National Indian Health Board
Washington, DC

National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality
Cambridge, MA

National Medical Association
Washington, DC

National Partnership for Women & Families
Washington, DC

National Rural Health Association
Alexandria, VA

National Senior Citizens Law Center
Washington, DC

National Women's Law Center
Washington, DC

New England Alliance for Children's Health
Boston, MA

New Haven Legal Assistance Association
New Haven, CT

New Mexico Assembly on School-Based Health Care
Santa Fe, NM

New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
Albuquerque, NM

New Mexico Primary Care Association
Albuquerque, NM

New Mexico Voices for Children
Albuquerque, NM

New York AIDS Coalition
New York, NY

The North Carolina Partnership for Children
Raleigh, NC

Northeast Louisiana Children's Coalition
Monroe, LA

Northeast Missouri Health Council
Kirksville, MO

Northern Santa Barbara County United Way
Santa Maria, CA

Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board
Portland, OR

Nurse-Family Partnership
Denver, CO

OPTIONS for Independence
Auburn, NY

Oregon Primary Care Association
Portland, OR

Out of Many, One
Washington, DC

Parent to Parent of Colorado
Denver, CO

Pasadena Youth Center
Pasadena, CA

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Harrisburg, PA

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth
Philadelphia, PA

PICO National Network
Oakland, CA

Po'ailani, Inc.
Kailua, HI

Preschool California
Oakland, CA

Pre-K Now
Washington, DC

Prevent Blindness America
Chicago, IL

Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
Lexington, KY

Promise Community Partners
Salt Lake City, UT

Public Health - Seattle & King County
Seattle, WA

Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
Washington, DC/Dunkirk, MD

RESULTS-Santa Fe
Santa Fe, NM

Rural Health Association of Tennessee
Murfreesboro, TN

Salt Lake Community Action Program
West Salt Lake City, UT

Salt Lake County Commission on Youth
Salt Lake City, UT

Salt Lake County Mayor, Peter Corroon
Salt Lake County, UT

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Chicago, IL

SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center
Columbia, SC

School Social Work Association of America
Sterling, VA

SEIU Pennsylvania State Council
Harrisburg, PA

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Washington, DC

Seton Family of Hospitals and Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas
Austin, TX

Small Business California (SB-Cal)
San Francisco, CA

Small Business Majority
Sausalito, CA

Somerset County United Way
Bridgewater, NJ

Southeastern Network of Youth and Family Services
Bonita Springs, FL

Statewide Poverty Action Network
Seattle, WA

Suicide Prevention Action Network USA
Washington, DC

Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations
Nashville, TN

Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
Nashville, TN

Tennessee Health Care Campaign
Nashville, TN

Tennessee Justice Center
Nashville, TN

Tennessee Nurses Association
Nashville, TN

Tennessee Primary Care Association
Brentwood, TN

Texas State Employees Union / CWA Local 6186
Austin, TX

Therapeutic Communities of America
Washington, DC

Tourette Syndrome Association
Bayside, NY

Uintah Basin Association of Governments
South Roosevelt, UT

United Cerebral Palsy
Washington, DC

United Neighborhood Centers of America
Washington, DC

United Neighborhood Health Services, Inc.
Nashville, TN

United Spinal Association
Jackson Heights, NY

The United States Conference of Mayors
Washington, DC

United Way of Atlantic County
Galloway, NJ

United Way California Capitol Region
Sacramento, CA

United Way of America
Alexandria, VA

United Way of Anderson County
Anderson, SC

United Way of Butte & Glenn Counties
Chico, CA

United Way of California
San Jose, CA

United Way of Central Indiana
Indianapolis, IN

United Way Fox Cities
Menasha, WI

United Way of Greater High Point
High Point, NC

United Way of Greater Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

United Way of Greater Portland
Portland, ME

United Way of Humboldt County
Eureka, CA

United Way of Kern County
Bakersfield, CA

The United Way of Merced County
Merced, CA

United Way of Northeast Florida
Jacksonville, FL

United Way of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, PA

United Way of San Joaquin County
Stockton, CA

United Way of Santa Cruz County
Capitola, CA

United Way of Tampa Bay, Inc.
Tampa, Florida

United Way of the Bay Area
San Francisco, CA

United Way of Ventura County
Camarillo, CA

United Ways of Washington
Seattle, WA

United Way Silicon Valley
San Jose, CA

University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey
Newark, NJ

University of Michigan C. S. Mott Children's Hospital
Ann Arbor, MI

University of Michigan Hospitals and Health Centers
Ann Arbor, MI

Utah AFL-CIO
Salt Lake City, UT

Utah Building Trades Council
Utah Community Action Partnership Association
Salt Lake City, UT

Utah Education Association
Murray, UT

Utah Issues: The Center for Eliminating Poverty
Salt Lake City, UT

Utah Statewide Independent Living Council (USILC)
Salt Lake City, UT

Utahns Against Hunger
Salt Lake City, UT

Utah's Association for the Education of Young Children
Salt Lake City, UT

Virginia Poverty Law Center
Richmond, VA

Voices for America's Children
Washington, DC

Voices for Michigan's Children
Lansing, MI

Voices for Illinois Children
Chicago, IL

Voices for Ohio's Children
Cleveland, OH

Voices for Utah Children
Salt Lake City, UT

Washington Health Foundation
Seattle, WA

Washington State Chapter of the Physicians for Social Responsibility
Seattle, WA

Washington State Representative Shay Schual-Berke, MD
33rd legislative district

West Virginia's Promise – The Alliance for Youth
Frankford, WV

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
Madison, WI

Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital
New Haven, CT

YMCA of the USA
Chicago, IL

Your Community Connection of Ogden/Northern Utah
Ogden, UT

9to5, National Association of Working Women
Milwaukee, WI

9to5 Poverty Network Initiative
Milwaukee, WI

9to5 Colorado
Denver, CO

9to5 Bay Area
San Jose, CA

9to5 Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

cc: Mrs. Laura Bush, First Lady

The Honorable Mike Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Mr. Kerry Weems, Acting Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Mr. Dennis Smith, Director, Center for Medicaid and State Operations, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

The Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable John Boehner, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce