

November 30, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

As advocates for children and pregnant women, we are growing increasingly distressed by Congress' failure to take timely action to extend funding for the popular Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Funding for CHIP is now 61 days past its September 30 deadline and the families of the 9 million children and over 370,000 pregnant women who rely on the program face an uncertain future. It is no longer sufficient to offer vague promises of future action. Congress must extend CHIP funding *immediately* to avoid compounding the damage already done. Specifically, we urge the immediate passage of the strong five-year extension of CHIP, as supported by both the House and Senate, without any harmful offsets.

CHIP is a bipartisan success story. It has a proven track record of providing high-quality, cost-effective health coverage for 9 million low-income children and pregnant women in working families that should be celebrated and continued. Children with CHIP coverage receive well-child exams and screenings for health and developmental concerns. If a health issue is found, CHIP covers things like asthma medications, speech therapy and cancer treatment and in many cases this coverage is life-saving. But the continuing uncertainty and lack of timely Congressional action is causing increasing concern in states. [Thirty states are projected to exhaust their federal CHIP funds between December 2017 and March 2018](#). Officials who have for months been drafting contingency plans for unclear futures now plan to send disenrollment letters to enrollees. [Colorado is the first state to act on those plans, announcing earlier this week they are now starting to send letters to CHIP families](#). Shrinking CHIP allocations are being used to prepare families to lose CHIP rather than providing health care for low-income children and pregnant women as intended.

Families who rely on CHIP already face uncertainty and challenges, whether managing their child's complicated health condition or ensuring they have the medications on hand that they need. The last thing they should have to suffer is added uncertainty about the future of their children's medical and dental coverage or whether they will have continued access to necessary prenatal care services. By not acting in a timely manner to extend CHIP funding, Congress has forced them to face the threat of losing coverage altogether. Moreover, the patchwork of state funding deadlines makes a child's or pregnant woman's access to continued CHIP coverage dependent on their ZIP code. Our children and expectant mothers deserve better.

Your leadership is needed to ensure CHIP funding is extended now. One-third of children enrolled in CHIP live in your four states. We urge you to move forward immediately with a strong, bipartisan five-year extension of CHIP funding that is not accompanied by harmful offsets on the next bipartisan must-pass bill. Nine million children, pregnant women, their families and communities are depending on you to act now.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Dental Health Project
Children's Hospital Association
Family Voices
First Focus
March of Dimes
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners