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FAMILY PHYSICIANS

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



American College of Physicians
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ACOG

THE AMERICAN CONGRESS
OF OBSTETRICIANS
AND GYNECOLOGISTS



A M E R I C A N
O S T E O P A T H I C
A S S O C I A T I O N

AMERICAN
PSYCHIATRIC
ASSOCIATION



September 14, 2017

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

House Speaker Paul Ryan
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senate Democratic Leader Charles Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Orrin Hatch
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Greg Walden
Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Committee
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Ron Wyden
Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Frank Pallone
Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce
Committee
237 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Democratic Leaders Schumer and Pelosi, Chairmen Hatch and Walden, and Ranking Members Wyden and Pallone:

On behalf of the more than 560,000 physicians and medical students represented by the combined memberships of the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Osteopathic Association, and the American Psychiatric Association, we are writing to urge Congress to take immediate action to enact a five-year extension of funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) in order to ensure that our patients have ongoing access to this crucial affordable and comprehensive coverage option. Our members are the front-line physicians who care for patients in rural, urban, wealthy and low-income communities, and are the foundation of the American health care system.

Since its inception in 1997, CHIP, together with Medicaid, has helped to reduce the numbers of uninsured children by a remarkable 68 percent. With CHIP funding set to expire on September 30, 2017, Congress must act now to stabilize the CHIP funding stream and protect the gains in children's health coverage that have resulted in more than 95 percent of all children in America being enrolled in some form of insurance coverage.

CHIP has a proven track record of providing high-quality, cost-effective coverage for low-income children and pregnant women in working families. CHIP was a smart, bipartisan solution to a real problem facing American children and families when it was adopted in 1997 and its importance and impact in securing a healthy future for children in low-income families has only increased. There is widespread, bipartisan agreement about the continued need for CHIP to provide affordable, pediatric-specific coverage to almost 9 million children who cannot afford private coverage or lack access to employer-based coverage. It is a model program that has played a critical role in reducing the number of uninsured children by more than 50 percent while improving health outcomes and access to care for children and pregnant women across the nation.

With federal CHIP funding set to end on September 30, 2017, states are facing critical decisions about the future of their CHIP programs – decisions that will impact access for children and families. Many states are just weeks away from setting in motion processes to establish waiting lists and send out disenrollment notices to families. Once undertaken, these actions will have an immediate effect, creating chaos in program administration and confusion for families and the providers who serve them.

Extending CHIP is particularly important considering the ongoing debate on the future of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicaid, and the stability of the individual insurance markets. With state budgets already set for the coming year, states are counting on CHIP to continue in its current form. Changes to CHIP's structure – including changes to the Maintenance of Effort or the enhanced CHIP matching rate – would cause significant disruption in children's coverage and leave states with critical shortfalls in their budgets.

Today, the 560,000 physicians and medical students we represent stand united in urging Congress to honor CHIP's 20 years of success by enacting a five-year extension of CHIP funding so that this critical source of health coverage for the children and pregnant women we treat every day will be maintained into the future. Thank you for your consideration of this critically important health care issue for children and pregnant women.

Sincerely,
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association