



## **American College of Physicians Statement for the Record**

### **Senate Finance Committee Hearing**

#### **The Children's Health Insurance Program: The Pathway Forward**

**September 7, 2017**

The American College of Physicians (ACP) commends the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee Senator Orrin Hatch and Ranking Member Ron Wyden for convening this hearing on the importance of extending the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) which is set to expire at the end of the month. We applaud your working together to examine solutions that will ensure that this program will continue to provide funding for low income children who depend on it to ensure that they have health insurance coverage that meets their needs.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second largest physician group in the United States, representing 152,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

#### **ACP urges Congress to Act Now to Continue CHIP**

ACP has been a stalwart supporter of CHIP and we are pleased to know that an agreement on legislation to extend CHIP funding for five years has been reached between Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden. We urge Congress to support and pass this legislation, S. 1827, the Keep Kids Insurance Dependable and Secure Act of 2017, so that the nearly 9 million children who depend on it will not lose coverage. A five year extension of the program will provide states that administer the CHIP program with the certainty needed to plan a long-term budget that meets the needs of their children. It will alleviate the anxiety of many parents who are now wondering whether or not their children, who currently receive coverage under CHIP, will continue to have such coverage if Congress does not act by the end of September. State officials have warned the Congress that they may have to freeze CHIP enrollment or terminate coverage if funding is not extended by the end of the month.

## **Results of the CHIP Program**

CHIP was created to provide health care coverage for children who did not qualify for Medicaid but often found it difficult to obtain affordable health care coverage in the private market. CHIP builds on the success of Medicaid and recent estimates determine that in 2016, CHIP covered [8.9 million children while 37.1 million children](#) were enrolled in Medicaid coverage. CHIP has been an overwhelming success in reducing the uninsured rate among our nation's children and reducing the financial stress of families that must bear the cost of this coverage. As a result of the passage of CHIP, and Medicaid, new census data reflects that the uninsured rate among children has reached an all-time low of 4.5 percent. According to a recent study by the [Urban Institute](#), "from 1997 when the CHIP program was enacted, to 2012, the uninsured rate among all children declined by six percentage points and by even more (12 percentage points) among children with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level." The [Urban institute](#) also notes that CHIP and Medicaid have also improved access to care and reduced the financial burden for families with children enrolled in these programs. Not only do these programs result in improved access to health care for our children, but [studies](#) also show that Medicaid and CHIP coverage result in positive outcomes in health, educational advancement, and financial success.

## **Conclusion**

As evidence has shown, CHIP has been a very successful program and it is critically important that Congress act now to extend the program for an additional five years. We thank Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden for working together, in a bipartisan fashion, on legislation to ensure the continuation of CHIP funding for the long term. ACP is pleased to lend its support to S. 1827, the Keep Kids Insurance Dependable and Secure Act, and help advance it through the legislative process. We urge Congress to act quickly to approve this legislation as only a few days remain before the program expires at the end of this month.