



FIRST FOCUS

MAKING CHILDREN & FAMILIES THE PRIORITY

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October 4, 2007

The Honorable John Dingell
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell:

I am writing on behalf of First Focus, a bipartisan advocacy organization committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, to thank you for your vote in support of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) (H.R. 976). We are grateful for your leadership in supporting this important legislation, which will ensure continued coverage for the 6.6 million children who already rely on SCHIP and provide coverage for an additional 3.1 million children who are currently uninsured. We also applaud your leadership to ensure that the final agreement included strong provisions to improve states' ability to identify and enroll qualified uninsured children into Medicaid and SCHIP by giving states the option to employ streamlined "Express Lane" enrollment processes.

As an organization committed to improving health care for all children, we know that a strong SCHIP reauthorization will be enormously helpful as we work toward the goal of ensuring that all of our nation's children have access to the health coverage they need. Without a doubt, Express Lane Enrollment strategies, which help to eliminate the bureaucratic red tape that prevents data-sharing and serves as a barrier to enrollment, are critical if we are to make serious improvements in providing coverage for the 6 million children who are currently eligible but unenrolled in SCHIP or Medicaid.

The CHIPRA legislation builds on SCHIP's decade of success and will be enormously helpful in ensuring coverage for nearly 10 million low-income children. The passage of this strong bipartisan bill represents an important step toward reducing the numbers of uninsured children across the nation. We are grateful for your leadership and your vote, and indeed, all of your efforts to stand with America's children and to ensure that they get access to the health coverage they deserve. We look forward to continuing to work with you to address the health care needs of our nation's children.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley
President