



July 27, 2007

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman, Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman, Ways and Means Committee
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Children's Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act

Dear Chairmen Dingell and Rangel:

The Children's Defense Fund can think of few, if any, things more critical and achievable this year than providing our children a healthy start in life and successful transition to adulthood. We are grateful to you for keeping Congress' promise to spend \$50 billion in new funds to improve and expand child health coverage over the next five years. Your SCHIP reauthorization package is an important step in the right direction.

Good governance requires our political leaders to make smart and moral choices. The American people do not think children should have to wait until they are 65 years old to have health coverage, and I agree. While \$50 billion is not enough to cover all children, it is a good down payment, and I urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that every penny of those funds is used to improve and expand child health coverage. This means supporting on the House floor an increase in tobacco taxes and elimination of Medicare Advantage overpayments, and standing firm through conference to ensure that as many children as possible are covered this year and significant program improvements are made.

While the SCHIP package passed by the Energy and Commerce Committee would allow states to make important program improvements, including expanding coverage to pregnant women and instituting express lane eligibility, I remain concerned about leaving the adoption of these critical improvements up to each state. I know from my own experience that when given an option to do the right thing in the face of great need, some states will take action, but others will not. It is unconscionable to leave a child's life to such chance when we *know* what they need to survive and thrive.

The long-term cost to society of not investing in its children and in health prevention early in life is enormous. Your SCHIP reauthorization package recognizes this and takes steps toward the critical goal of ensuring that *all* children have health coverage. I look forward to working with you during this process and beyond to ensure that no child is left behind.

Sincerely yours,

Marian Wright Edelman