

# AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS



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## **LEGISLATIVE ALERT!**

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March 13, 2007

The Honorable John Dingell  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2328 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

The AFL-CIO applauds the introduction of the Children's Health First Act, which will provide states with incentives and resources to expand health coverage to millions of uninsured children. While the President has proposed funding and policy changes that would threaten coverage for children now enrolled in the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), your legislation takes a comprehensive and effective approach to reaching the six million children who are eligible for health coverage today but are not enrolled.

The Children's Health First Act builds on the success of SCHIP by giving states proven tools to identify children who are eligible for SCHIP and to eliminate barriers to their enrollment. It also establishes a funding approach that reflects the increased program costs associated with annual health care cost hikes and population growth, and ensures sufficient funding for states that expand eligibility to reach more uninsured children.

Furthermore, the legislation uses SCHIP to leverage more employer-sponsored coverage – a practical approach that recognizes that seventy percent of all uninsured are in working families with at least one full-time worker. Depending on their SCHIP income eligibility guidelines, states can either allow employers and families to buy SCHIP coverage for children above the state's eligibility threshold, or provide a state subsidy for children covered through an employer-sponsored plan.

As Congress considers reauthorization of SCHIP, the Children's Health First Act acknowledges both the progress made in children's coverage and the work still to be done in order to reach the nine million uninsured children in this nation. The AFL-CIO wholeheartedly supports this important bill.

Sincerely,

William Samuel, Director  
DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATION