



July 25, 2007

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman, Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman, Ways and Means Committee
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman, Health Subcommittee
Energy and Commerce Committee
237 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Fortney Stark
Chairman, Health Subcommittee
Ways and Means Committee
239 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen:

On behalf of more than 3 million volunteers and 1,400 staff members of the March of Dimes Foundation, I want to thank you for your leadership developing a well crafted proposal to reauthorize and strengthen the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). If approved, this bill would enable states to take a number of important steps forward to strengthen and improve quality of care for low income women, infants and children.

As numerous studies have shown, being uninsured means that children are twice as likely to go without preventive care and that infants and children with serious and ongoing health problems can have difficulty accessing the specialty services they require. It is our understanding that the package now pending before the Committee would address these issues by giving states the authority and resources they need to maintain coverage for the estimated 6.6 million infants and children who rely on SCHIP for their health insurance each year and to enroll many more children who meet the program's income guidelines but are currently uninsured, including legal immigrants. The March of Dimes is especially pleased that the bill includes incentives to encourage states to adopt best practices, such as presumptive and continuous eligibility which when implemented, will accelerate access to services and protect against intermittent loss of coverage.

The Foundation also supports with enthusiasm the provision in the mark that gives states the option to cover low income pregnant women without having to obtain a federal waiver. Providing the full spectrum of maternity coverage -- prenatal through post-partum care -- improves the likelihood that problem pregnancies can be managed successfully and that the risk of a poor birth outcome is significantly reduced.

The March of Dimes applauds the bill's pediatric quality section as we believe that development and use of appropriate performance measures will improve care for infants and children. Moreover, performance measures will enable policy makers and consumers to use the information generated to evaluate program performance and to select the providers that best meet their health care needs. In short, pediatric quality measures will strengthen program

accountability and simultaneously provide information essential to the improvement of health services for infants and children.

As this bill moves forward the March of Dimes stands ready to work with work closely with you and your colleagues to win approval of a strong SCHIP reauthorization bill by the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Marina L. Weiss".

Marina L. Weiss, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President, Public Policy
and Government Affairs