

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



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July 25, 2007

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

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

Dear Chairmen Dingell and Rangel:

On behalf of the 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists of the American Academy of Pediatrics, I write today to thank you for the hard work that you have undertaken to draft a substantive Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) reauthorization. Pediatricians stand with you on this important legislation and will work tirelessly towards its passage.

Your proposal achieves many of the goals of the Academy. The commitment of \$50 billion to reaching eligible children is laudable. Far from an expansion of the programs, your measure focuses on reaching children who are, on paper, eligible for coverage under Medicaid or CHIP. Without funding, however, a child is not really eligible for coverage.

The Academy also greatly appreciates your attention to a very real access issue through the creation of the Children's Access and Payment Equity Commission or "CAPE." All too often, children receive coverage without real access to care due to dismal payment rates under Medicaid and CHIP. We look forward to raising the profile of this issue through the work of this Commission.

Numerous other components of the bill also will be a great help to children, including your attempts to address the citizenship and identification documentation issue, clarifying that EPSDT is still a requirement under benchmark plans approved under Deficit Reduction Act rules, and the inclusion of a substantive new effort to strengthen pediatric quality measurement.

Finally, we appreciate your efforts to focus on children in this bill. As CHIP reauthorization legislation moves through Congress, we believe it is inappropriate to attach the Bush administration's health care tax credit proposal to it. The CHIP reauthorization is not the place to restructure the entire health care system with untested tax policy that may negatively impact children's access to care.

Sincerely,

Jay E. Berkelhamer, MD, FAAP
President