



**Council of the
Great City Schools**

Council of the Great City Schools
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October 16, 2007

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Representative:

The Council of the Great City Schools, the coalition of the nation's largest central city school districts, writes to urge you to vote to override the presidential veto of the Children's Health Insurance Reauthorization Act, H.R. 976. Overriding this veto is essential to prevent States from beginning to roll back current health coverage for some 6.5 million low-income children whose parents do not qualify for Medicaid and cannot afford private insurance. Hundreds of thousands of currently covered children now risk losing their CHIP coverage as States scramble to adjust to the financial uncertainties of the temporary extension of this critical program.

The vetoed bill would also cover nearly 4 million additional children that are uninsured, and would ensure that low-income children will receive appropriate mental health and dental care, in addition to essential medical assistance. The expansion of outreach initiatives and the streamlining of eligibility determinations, including presumptive eligibility and express lane determinations will facilitate enrollment of eligible children and the provision of needed health services.

Since the Great City Schools serve communities with the highest concentrations of poverty in the nation, it is critically important that our children come to school healthy and ready to learn. In fact, the school setting provides an optimal location for meeting the medical and other health-related needs of school children, who are required by law to be in daily attendance.

The Council is particularly supportive of an important provision of the CHIP bill (section 616) preventing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) from administratively slashing Medicaid reimbursements to schools by some 20% to 50% without Congressional approval. Without this short-term moratorium in H.R. 976 prohibiting these administrative actions by HHS, new proposed regulations could make current school-based medical assistance for many Medicaid-eligible children - most of whom are students with disabilities - unallowable and non-reimbursable.

The Council of the Great City Schools, therefore, urges a bipartisan vote to override the presidential veto of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act.

Sincerely,

Michael Casserly
Executive Director

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