

*United States Senate*  
*Committee on Finance*



*Sen. Chuck Grassley · Iowa*  
*Ranking Member*

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Grassley: Children's health bill helps states reach low-income kids who are U.S. citizens

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chuck Grassley said the children's health insurance legislation that is before the House and Senate this week would cut through red tape that's preventing states from reaching more low-income children who are U.S. citizens.

Opponents of the overall proposal have said the legislation would cover children of illegal immigrants. Grassley said in a letter sent today to the House Speaker and Minority leader that such overheated and misleading rhetoric is a desperate attempt to defeat the children's health bill.

“The Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act is carefully written to get the program back on track and serving low-income kids who are citizens of the United States,” Grassley said. “Any other assertion is unfounded.”

The text of Grassley's letter to House leaders follows here.

September 25, 2007

Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman John Boehner  
Minority Leader  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker and Mr. Leader:

In 2005, the Energy & Commerce Committee found that states were not doing a good job of confirming the citizenship of Medicaid applicants. So the Committee moved policy in the

Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) that was intended to address the problem. Unfortunately, we now know the Committee's policy used a shotgun where a scalpel was necessary. It is beyond question that the DRA has caused a bureaucratic nightmare for some states that is keeping Americans from getting coverage.

One provision in the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) attempts to fix the flaws in the DRA. It fixes a flaw in the DRA that was a burden on Indians seeking benefits. Let's be candid about this: very few people are sneaking across the Rio Grande claiming to be Algonquians. It cures the ridiculous policy where CMS required citizenship documentation for kids born in American hospitals where Medicaid paid for the delivery. Under current law, a child born in America is an American.

The biggest change CHIPRA makes is to allow states to use a retrospective system to confirm citizenship. A state can use the current system that was implemented through the DRA, and many states will continue to use that system. But other states would be able to move to a new system of verifying citizenship through social security numbers.

States have a fundamental responsibility to confirm the identity of their applicants. That does not change with CHIPRA. Any allegation that people will use fake identities to access benefits is not a CHIPRA issue. It is a general fraud and abuse issue that has nothing to do with this bill. And that situation exists whether or not CHIPRA is signed into law.

The vast majority of individuals with valid social security numbers are American citizens. There is an extremely small group of non-citizens with valid social security numbers. These are people who have come to America to work. They have jobs. They do not access social benefits. There is an even smaller group of individuals who have valid social security numbers who have overstayed their visa and are now illegal immigrants. To fix the system involves allowing the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to have data matching agreements—which SSA and DHS should put in place today regardless and it's not an issue that needs resolving for a children's health bill.

Making sure that people applying for benefits are eligible for those benefits is an important responsibility. CHIPRA helps find a reasonable middle ground between the excess of the DRA policy and states lackadaisical attitudes that existed before the DRA. The overheated and misleading rhetoric from opponents of this children's health reauthorization bill is nothing more than a desperate attempt to divert your attention from voting for a children's health bill.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member