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## **CARDIN AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BUDGET RESOLUTION PRIORITIZE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

*Increase funding to protect water quality, NIH research and LIHEAP, pediatric dental care*

WASHINGTON – **Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)**, lauded Senate approval of three amendments he authored or co-sponsored that will protect the health and safety of American families and especially children. Senator Cardin authored an amendment that increases funding to monitor the safety of drinking water nationwide. He co-sponsored an amendment by Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) that expands funding for the Maryland-based National Institutes for Health (NIH) and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Senator Cardin also authored an amendment to fund pediatric dental care for low-income children that the Budget Committee passed unanimously before sending the budget resolution to the full Senate.

**“This Budget Resolution is important because it defines our key spending priorities for the coming year. Congress has no higher priority than the health and safety of the American people,”** said Senator Cardin, a member of the Budget Committee. **“The President’s budget proposal was wrong to cut funding for critical programs like water quality studies, especially at a time when pharmaceuticals and other products are being found in the water supply of over 40 million citizens. I am proud that the Senate not only reversed the President’s cuts but, with my amendment, provided a 15 percent increase in funding to ensure the safety of our citizens.”**

According to the Associated Press, trace amounts of pharmaceuticals, caffeine, and cleaning product chemicals have been found in the drinking water supplies of at least 41 million Americans. Drinking water in the DC area tested positive for six pharmaceuticals.

Under the President’s budget proposal, the U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS) National Water-Quality Assessment and Toxic Substances Hydrology programs would be cut by about \$12 million. All long-term data collection for groundwater and source water used for drinking would be stopped. The Senate Budget resolution restored FY2008 levels. The Cardin amendment increases funding by an additional 15 percent so that USGS can bolster its water quality research and reporting efforts at this critical time.

The President’s budget also called for flat funding for the NIH and LIHEAP. The Senate Budget Resolution, coupled with the Harkin-Specter Amendment that Senator Cardin co-sponsored, rejects those cuts and adds a total of \$3 billion to NIH funding and \$1 billion to LIHEAP (\$1.5B above the President’s request). **“Robust, sustained funding for the National Institutes for Health is essential our ongoing search for treatments and scientific breakthroughs, as well as our local Maryland economy,”** Senator Cardin said after the vote to approve the amendment. **“And as energy costs rise to**

**historically high levels, leaving many Americans struggling with the cost of filling their gas tank and heating their home, LIHEAP is critical to the health and well-being of the nearly 90,000 low-income Marylanders who rely on annual assistance with their electric bills and weatherization services.”**

Senator Cardin’s amendment on pediatric dental care was adopted by a unanimous vote of the Budget Committee and included as part of the base legislation considered by the full Senate on Thursday. It provides instructions to the Finance Committee to allocate funding to improve access to pediatric dental care for children from low-income families in Medicaid and SCHIP through a deficit-neutral reserve fund.

**“One of the greatest investments we can make in the future of our country is in the health of our children. Once again, the priorities expressed in the President’s budget ran counter to the priorities of the American people,” said Senator Cardin. “Dental decay is the most chronic childhood disease in America. Across America, there are millions of children with untreated dental problems. And as we learned with 12-year-old Deamonte Driver from Prince George’s County, left untreated, a simple tooth ache can become deadly. I regret that the President vetoed the Children’s Health Insurance Bill that would have extended dental benefits to children in need. But I will continue to move forward proposals like this budget amendment that help fill the coverage gap.”**

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