



THE UNITED STATES SURGEONS GENERAL

A Surgeons General Call to Action for Child Health

October 16, 2007

Dear Members of the United States Congress:

Ten years ago, Congress, the president, states, and private insurers embarked on a successful federal-state and public-private partnership to protect our nation's future. As a result, more than six million children whose working parents could not afford health insurance gained access to essential health services through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Today, we are at another critical juncture in American history. Our nation's children need us to work together again to protect their future and the health of our nation.

We respectfully, collectively, and strongly encourage Congress to act today to ensure that children's health care continues to be covered through SCHIP. We as United States Surgeons General implore you to not put off the health needs of our nation's children. Please act today. We submit to you that to help children grow to be healthy and self-sufficient members of society, you as our elected leaders must support states, communities, and health professionals in ensuring that all our children have access to high-quality health care.

Over the past four decades as United States Surgeons General, we have helped to encourage unprecedented advances in our nation's health. Without question, the partnerships forged through SCHIP are advancing the health and well-being of children in America. Since SCHIP was formed in 1997, it has successfully increased the percentage of low-income children who have health insurance. Through SCHIP, millions of children can access high-quality health care to recover from childhood illnesses and injuries, and they can also receive preventive health services that help them stay healthy, go to school, and ultimately succeed in life. The reality is that when compared with children who are uninsured, children enrolled in SCHIP are more likely to have a regular source of care and more likely to get care when they need it. In addition, because they have access to appropriate health care, children covered by SCHIP are less likely to require hospitalization than children who are uninsured.

Finally, while millions of children have benefited from SCHIP, more than nine million children in the United States are uninsured today. We can never be complacent until all of our children have access to high-quality health care. ***Again, we ask you to act today to ensure that children's health care continues to be covered through SCHIP.***

We look forward to continuing to work with you to maintain and improve the health, safety, and security of our children and our great nation.

In Good Health,

Julius B. Richmond, M.D., M.S.
12th United States Surgeon General (1977-1981)

C. Everett Koop, M.D., Sc.D.
13th United States Surgeon General (1982-1987)

Jocelyn Elders, M.D., M.S.
15th United States Surgeon General (1993-1994)

David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., FAAFP, FACPM, FACP
16th United States Surgeon General (1998-2002)

Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS
17th United States Surgeon General (2002-2006)