



Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

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Asian American Justice Center

PRESIDENT & CEO

March 13, 2007

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chair
Senate Committee on Budget
Hart Senate Office Building, Room 530
Constitution Avenue and 2nd Street, NE
Washington, DC 20510-3403

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Budget
Russell Senate Office Building, Room 393
Constitution and Delaware Avenues, NE
Washington, DC 20510-2904

Dear Chairman Conrad and Ranking Member Gregg,

On behalf of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR)—the nation's oldest, largest, and most diverse civil and human rights coalition—and the undersigned organizations, we are writing to request that your fiscal year 2008 budget includes sufficient funding to continue the remarkable success of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Building on the success of Medicaid, SCHIP has significantly improved children's access to health care, and has made great strides in covering racial and ethnic minority children. It is the right time to improve and strengthen both SCHIP and Medicaid to further increase access to affordable, comprehensive, equitable, and quality health coverage for all of our nation's children. A minimum of \$60 billion over five years in new federal funds should be included in the fiscal year 2008 budget.

Together, SCHIP and Medicaid have reduced the uninsured rate among all children, playing an especially significant role in minority communities. After the inception of SCHIP, the rate of uninsurance for Latino children dropped by nearly one-third, from a high of 30 percent to 21 percent. For African American and Asian and Pacific Islander children, the uninsured rate dropped by half: from 20 to 12 percent and from 17 to 8 percent, respectively. Medicaid and SCHIP help children obtain vital screening and prevention services that help them stay healthy and grow to be healthy and productive adults.

Despite the successes of SCHIP and Medicaid, nine million children remain uninsured, more than five million of whom are racial and ethnic minorities. A minimum of \$60 billion additional federal funds over five years will allow states to maintain their commitment to current SCHIP enrollees, make significant progress toward reducing the number of uninsured children, and help take this nation one step closer to eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in children's health.

It is also critical to include the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) in any SCHIP bill considered by Congress. Under current law, newly arrived immigrants face a five-year bar from receiving federal health benefits under Medicaid or SCHIP. ICHIA would restore Medicaid and SCHIP benefits to lawfully present immigrant children and pregnant women. Many

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states already spend their own money to provide safety net programs for low-income immigrants. Allowing states to use some federally funded services toward that goal would bring significant fiscal relief to states and would give them the flexibility to better address the needs of their populations.

Coverage for parents and pregnant women must also be maintained in SCHIP reauthorization. States that already covered most low-income children were encouraged by the federal government to obtain waivers to expand coverage to parents and pregnant women to reduce the number of uninsured through family coverage. Parents' coverage leads to increased enrollment for children and better utilization of health care services by children as well as providing health care for parents who would not otherwise have coverage.

As the nation's leading civil rights coalition, we are committed to children's health care and strongly believe that SCHIP reauthorization with additional funds should be among the highest priorities in the FY 2008 budget. We are deeply concerned that if the budget does not include additional funding to fully address the SCHIP shortfalls and account for growth in the program, many current SCHIP beneficiaries will lose their health care—and we believe we need to expand, not reduce, children's coverage.

We are committed to ensuring SCHIP reauthorization to continue our nation's great progress in covering more uninsured, low-income children, and hope that you will provide the funding necessary to ensure its success. We thank you for your consideration of this important matter and welcome the opportunity to strengthen and build on the success of these important health coverage programs.

Please contact Nancy Zirkin, vice president/director of Policy of LCCR, at (202) 263-2880 or Jocelyn Frye, General Counsel at the National Partnership for Women & Families, at (202) 986-2600 if you would like to discuss SCHIP or any other issues of importance to LCCR.

Sincerely,

Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

American Ethical Union
American Jewish Committee
Americans for Democratic Action, Inc.
Asian American Justice Center
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Bazon Center for Mental Health Law
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Federally Employed Women
Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council
International Union, UAW
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Dallas
Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Labor Committee
Jewish Women International
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of Women Voters of the United States
National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.



National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)
National Health Law Program
National Legal Aid and Defender Association
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
Organization of Chinese Americans
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
The Episcopal Church
The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ
Women's League for Conservative Judaism

CC:

The Honorable Harry M. Reid
Senate Majority Leader
Hart Senate Office Building, Room 528
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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
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