



POLICY ALERT

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Texas' CHIP Progress Now Depends on Congress!

The 2007 Texas legislative session saw important victories for Texas children. Legislators improved the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) program by restoring annual renewal, eliminating delays in coverage, and streamlining the enrollment process so that more children can receive affordable, cost-effective health care.

None of this matters, however, unless Congress reauthorizes the federal CHIP block grant at a high enough funding level to implement these improvements. The federal funding, referred to in Washington as the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP, provides a match of more than \$2 for every \$1 Texas spends on CHIP, making it a very cost-effective program.

Over the next two weeks, House and Senate committees will begin writing the bills that determine how much money states can get for CHIP in the next 5 years.

Because children's Medicaid and SCHIP are linked in Texas, we need a high enough funding level so that we can rebuild our rolls and enroll all eligible kids in Medicaid and CHIP. Without an increase to the SCHIP block grant, there won't be enough money to allow our program to grow along with our population. From 2003 to June 2007, 200,000 children were dropped (40% of kids) from CHIP alone. Now, nearly 700,000 uninsured Texas children are eligible for—but not enrolled in—CHIP and Medicaid. Congress is considering two promising measures to fund the SCHIP block grant growth: increased tobacco taxes, and savings from ending over-payments to Medicare HMOs.

The House and Senate have preliminarily budgeted \$50 billion in new dollars for children's health in their 2008 Budget Resolutions, but now House and Senate committees are making the final decisions. The Administration has not been enthusiastic about funding the full \$50 billion. As Texas grows, we need to ensure that our children have access to the high quality, affordable health care that CHIP and Medicaid offer. **The Texas Delegation needs to hear from you!**

Who Should I Contact?

- Everyone should contact the Texans who serve on the House committees who will write the CHIP bill (Energy and Commerce: Congressmen Gene **Green**; Charles A. **Gonzalez**; Joe **Barton**; Ralph M. **Hall**; Michael C. **Burgess**) and on the committee that finds the money to pay for it (Ways and Means: Congressmen Lloyd **Doggett**, Sam **Johnson**, and Kevin **Brady**).
- Everyone should contact Senators **Hutchison** and **Cornyn**. Though they are not on the Finance committee that will mark up the CHIP bill, Senator Hutchison has a good record of support on CHIP, and we need for Senator Cornyn to know that Texans do NOT agree with the notion that no new money is needed for CHIP!
- Your local Congressperson needs to hear from you too! Find full contact info for local and U.S. members at <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/>.