



State Children's Health Insurance Program Extended Congress Extends Program to 2009

On December 20th, Congress approved S 2499, the Medicare, Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance (SCHIP) Expansion Act of 2007. President Bush signed the bill on December 26, extending the State Children's Health Insurance Program until March 2009. Foregoing an opportunity to insure an additional 4 million children, the President and Congress chose instead to compromise and simply sustain the program at current levels with additional funds to cover the 20 states predicted to face shortfalls in 2008.

The CHF is exceedingly disappointed that Congress and the President failed to pass a full five-year reauthorization of SCHIP. The Children's Health Fund advocated throughout 2007 for a full reauthorization, including an expansion of coverage and addressing 10-year-old funding mechanisms that caused repeated shortfalls in many states. The new law sustains the program for another year, allowing states to plan and cover children currently enrolled in the program, but a crucial opportunity to provide coverage to more children was lost.

Our lawmakers twice tried to send President Bush legislation that would renew and expand the SCHIP program. Twice he vetoed the legislation. This latest concession, more than any public statement, reveals the esteem with which this successful program is viewed by those in Washington. Even with broad bi-partisan support, children's health insurance failed to garner enough support for re-investment. We are already starting to see the effects of this short-sighted approach to providing health care for our children: the number of uninsured children rose for the first time in a decade, according to the U.S. Census.

The Children's Health Fund will continue to advocate on behalf of children to secure health insurance, overcome barriers to care and make sure every child has a medical home and a healthy start to life.