



Children's Health Fund
Health Care and Advocacy for America's Most Vulnerable Children



The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, Finance Committee

The Honorable Senator Christopher J. Dodd
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee

Dear Senators:

As the process to enact legislation to reform our nation's health care system moves quickly toward consideration on the Senate floor, we are writing to urge you to ensure that key children's coverage provisions are included in the bill that will be considered on the floor.

Specifically, as you merge the two Senate bills, we urge you to maintain two amendments offered by Senator Jeff Bingaman (#C-2) and Senators Debbie Stabenow and Robert Menendez (#C-9) that were incorporated into the Finance Committee's Modified Mark. These amendments continue to be relevant and will be essential to ensure that no child is moved into the Health Insurance Exchange (HIE) until the exchange is fully functional for children. While the Healthy American's Act provides for the continuation of the CHIP program, millions of children, including some who are eligible for CHIP, will end up receiving their coverage through the HIE. These amendments were offered to ensure that no child is moved into the HIE until the exchange is able to provide coverage, benefits, and cost-sharing protections that are at least comparable to what children currently have in CHIP.

We strongly recommend that you also include the children's health benefit requirements for participating health plans in the HIE from the HELP Committee bill. These requirements appear to be stronger than the Finance Committee requirements in major respects. Specifically, the HELP bill includes stronger preventive coverage with Bright Futures. Additionally, we ask that coverage and benefit requirements permit women enrolled in a Young Invincibles Plan who become pregnant to seamlessly enroll in a comprehensive plan which provides maternity coverage. Given that 50 percent of pregnancies are unplanned, this policy provides a critical safeguard for essential maternity and newborn care.

Finally, as noted above, the Finance Committee bill assumes the continuation of the CHIP program through 2019. Given this and the significant role that Medicaid and CHIP play in covering children, we believe that the program's authority should be extended and funding sufficient to cover the cost of enrolling all eligible children and pregnant women should also be provided through 2019. We urge you to ensure that adequate funding and provisions for children's coverage are included within this legislation.

The children's community stands unified in our position that children should be better off after health reform and certainly that no child should lose coverage or be worse off as a result of health reform. We appreciate your consideration of our requests and urge you to include them in the final Senate bill.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Pediatrics
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Dental Health Project
Children's Health Fund
Family Voices
First Focus
March of Dimes
National Assembly on School-Based Health Care
National Association of Children's Hospitals
Voices for America's Children