

July 27, 2009

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chair, Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman:

As national organizations representing the interests of children, we urge you to support Representative Bobby Rush's amendments to America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 when it is considered by your Committee. They will help to ensure that no children will be worse off after health reform, and will guarantee children affordable coverage, head-to-toe benefits, and a simple, accessible, and equitable enrollment process. Without these changes millions of children could be worse off after health reform than they are now. While we recognize that there are important improvements for children in H.R. 3200, these additional improvements for children are critical.

Polls show that 90 percent of Americans believe every child in the U.S. has a right to health care. Yet, even when the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) legislation is fully implemented, five to six million children will still remain uninsured. Many of them will remain eligible for coverage in Medicaid or CHIP but not enrolled because of needless barriers. Eliminating red tape and bureaucracy by simplifying enrollment is the cheapest, quickest and smartest first step toward ensuring that the lowest-income children are covered. One of Representative Rush's amendments will build on recent reforms in CHIP and require states to implement key simplification procedures by 2013. These procedures will help ensure that both children and adults get enrolled.

Children also need a benefit package that addresses their unique health and mental health needs, and is designed to support their optimal development. It also must help ensure that children can actually access the benefits. Under the current legislation, some children who currently receive comprehensive benefits under CHIP could lose many of them and end up worse off. Another Rush amendment will ensure that all children in CHIP, and also children in the Exchange with incomes under 300 percent of the poverty line, are guaranteed all medically necessary services from head to toe.

Finally, health reform must preserve the cost-sharing protections already guaranteed to children through Medicaid and CHIP. Once they are enrolled in the Exchange, children must not be subjected to higher cost sharing limits than they now have. The third Rush amendment will ensure such cost-sharing protections are preserved for lower income children. Otherwise, we could spend \$1 trillion on health care and leave almost 10 million children with coverage that is less affordable and less comprehensive.

You know, as we do, that investments in children are wise investments and can prevent much larger expenditures in the future.

Our partnership of national organizations is committed to realizing America's promise to cover all children, and ensuring that the needs of millions of uninsured and underinsured children are met during efforts to reform health care. We urge your support for amendments that will incorporate these critical changes to H.R. 3200 to ensure that children will be better – not worse – off as a result of health reform.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Humane Association
American Psychological Association
Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Black Administrators in Child Welfare, Inc.
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Health Fund
Children's Healthcare is a Legal Duty
The Children's Partnership
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Action Partnership
Docs for Tots
Family Violence Prevention Fund
First Focus
Foster Care Alumni of America
Foster Family-based Treatment Association
Generations United
Healthy Teen Network
Mental Health America
The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National African American Drug Policy Coalition
National Alliance for the Advancement of Adolescent Health
National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Child Abuse Coalition
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Council of Jewish Women
National Exchange Club Foundation
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Foster Care Coalition
National Coalition of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers
National Indian Child Welfare Association
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Prevent Child Abuse America
RESULTS
Sisters of Charity of Seton Hall
Stop It Now!
Voices for America's Children
Youth Villages

Cc: Members of the Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, House Majority Leader
The Honorable James Clyburn, House Majority Whip