



Arizona Medical Association, California Medical Association, Florida Medical Association, Louisiana State Medical Society, Medical Society of New Jersey, Medical Society of the State of New York, North Carolina Medical Society, Oklahoma State Medical Association, South Carolina Medical Society, and Texas Medical Association

October 12, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Capitol S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Capitol S-221
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

As the Coalition of State Medical Societies — a group of 10 state medical associations representing more than 180,000 physician and medical student members — **we collectively exhort Congress to fully fund the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) at the enhanced federal matching rate through federal fiscal year 2019 and authorize its extension and funding for five years.**

Since 1997, when CHIP was enacted with bipartisan support, it has provided critical health care services to children in working families who earn too much income to qualify for Medicaid but too little to afford private health insurance. In fact, CHIP has helped cut the number of low-income, uninsured children across the country by 80 percent, dramatically increasing access to health care.

CHIP provides states with significant design flexibility to meet the needs of their specific child populations. And because CHIP is a program built specifically for children, its benefit design — which emphasizes receiving medical services in a primary care setting — and its robust provider network meet children’s unique needs. CHIP is particularly successful in accommodating children with special health care needs.

Research by the [Government Accountability Office](#) shows that CHIP coverage has more comprehensive benefits and is more affordable than either marketplace or employer-sponsored coverage. **We respectfully urge Congress to continue federal funding of CHIP at the enhanced matching rate in effect for each state as of Sept. 30, 2017, in accordance with the 2018-19 General Appropriations Act.**

Loss of CHIP coverage would mean almost 9 million vulnerable children would be forced into the expensive, unstable individual marketplace, likely resulting in no access to health care. After the natural disasters that recently ravaged Texas, Louisiana, and Florida, disrupting or eliminating coverage for children could be disastrous to their health.

Our states’ fiscal health would suffer as well. Returning CHIP to its previous match rate before 2019 would result in the loss of several billion dollars of federal funding at a time when states can scant afford the reductions and would not have time to plan. Eliminating CHIP altogether would mean billions in additional expense — tremendous costs states cannot afford — and drastic cuts that children do not deserve. Simply put, that proposal would place an untenable burden on state budgets and residents.

Please reauthorize the CHIP program as soon as possible so states can plan their budgets and children can continue to receive care. We also urge you to resist efforts to impose payment cuts on physicians to pay for the program. Access to care in government health care programs is already a challenge. We stand ready to work with you to maintain and improve health care access for the nation's children.

Respectfully,

The Coalition of State Medical Societies
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California Medical Association
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Louisiana State Medical Society
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