

September 5, 2017

Re: Extension of Children's Health Insurance Program

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Hatch and Walden and Ranking Members Wyden and Pallone:

The 35 national organizations of the Save Medicaid in the Schools Coalition urge you to support a full, clean extension of funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for five years at current funding levels. CHIP has benefitted from strong bipartisan support since its creation in 1997. By providing medical assistance to children who are not eligible for Medicaid, CHIP provides essential funding to support states to cover uninsured children. Any delay or a failure to immediately extend funding for CHIP will jeopardize coverage for children who are eligible for school-based health-related services leading to immediate and lasting harmful effects for America's most vulnerable citizens. A lapse in coverage for children places more barriers on their ability to come to school ready to learn. During a time of great uncertainty in the healthcare system, children need the consistent, reliable health coverage CHIP provides today.

A school's primary responsibility is to provide students with a high-quality education. However, children cannot learn to their fullest potential with unmet health needs. As such, school district personnel regularly provide critical health services to ensure that all children are ready to learn and able to thrive alongside their peers. Schools deliver health services effectively and efficiently since school is where children spend most of their days. The access to health care services that is supported through CHIP improves health care and educational outcomes for students. Providing health and wellness services for students ultimately enables more children to become employable and pursue higher-education.

More than half of the nearly nine million children served by CHIP are eligible to receive services in school through their state Medicaid programs. Fifteen states exclusively use CHIP funds to extend their Medicaid programs, meaning all children who qualify for CHIP receive identical services and benefits as their traditional Medicaid-counterparts. In most states a substantial portion of children served by CHIP receive Medicaid services and benefits protections. If Congress does not act quickly to extend funding for these children's healthcare then school districts will lose funding for the critical health services these children receive that ensure they are healthy enough to learn. School districts depend on CHIP to finance many of these services and have already committed to the staff and

contractors they require to provide mandated services for their upcoming 2017-2018 school year.

Without a CHIP extension, every child educated in school districts across the country will feel the pain. No school district's financial obligations and mandate to address a child's health needs goes away simply because CHIP funds disappear. Children with unmet health needs miss more days of school and can fall behind. The failure to continue funding CHIP would merely shift the financial burden of providing services to the schools and the state and local taxpayers who fund them.

School districts use their Medicaid and CHIP reimbursement funds in a variety of ways to help support the learning and development of the children they serve. In a 2017 survey of school districts, district officials reported that two-thirds of Medicaid dollars are used to support the work of health professionals and other specialized instructional support personnel (e.g., speech-language pathologists, audiologists, occupational therapists, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses) who provide comprehensive health and mental health services to students. Districts also use these funds to expand the availability of a wide range of health and mental health services available to students in poverty, who are more likely to lack consistent access to healthcare professionals. Further, some districts depend on Medicaid reimbursements to purchase and update specialized equipment (e.g., walkers, wheelchairs, exercise equipment, special playground equipment, and equipment to assist with hearing and seeing) as well as assistive technology for students with disabilities to help them learn alongside their peers.

The loss of CHIP funds would also hinder many children's ability to access basic health screenings for vision, hearing, and mental health challenges and access to early identification and treatment. Left unaddressed, these challenges or delays undermine children's ability to learn and make any problems more difficult and expensive to treat later. Loss of CHIP funding would also jeopardize schools' ability to conduct routine screenings on-site and help to enroll eligible students in Medicaid or other public coverage programs or connect them with needed community-based services.

Congress must act expediently to extend CHIP, so states and districts have the budget certainty necessary to continue to run CHIP programs and seek necessary reimbursements. We urge you to carefully consider the important benefits that CHIP provides to our nation's children. Schools are often the hub of the community, and failing to extend funding for CHIP could lead to meaningful reductions to comprehensive health and mental and behavioral health care for children.

If you have questions about the letter or wish to meet to discuss this issue further, please do not hesitate to reach out to the coalition co-chair Sasha Pudelski (spudelski@aasa.org).

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Accelify
AESA, Association of Education Service Agencies
American Dance Therapy Association

American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA)
American Federation of Teachers
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Coalition for Community Schools
Community Catalyst
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC)
Family Voices
First Focus
Healthy Schools Campaign
IDEA Infant Toddlers Coordinators Association (ITCA)
Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Alliance for Medicaid in Education
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Black Justice Coalition
National Disability Rights Network
National Education Association
National Health Law Program
National Rural Education Association
School Social Work Association of America
The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Union for Reform Judaism
United Way Worldwide